







THE  
ABSENT MAN,  
A NARRATIVE.

EDITED  
BY SIR PETER PLASTIC,  
KNIGHT OF THE ORDER OF THE TOWER  
AND SWORD.

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“ EX NIHILO, NIHILO FIT.”

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LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY,  
PATERNOSTER ROW.

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1817.

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**Bensley and Son,  
Bolt Court, Fleet Street, London.**

## PREFATORY DEDICATION.

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SIR PETER PLASTIC, knight of the order of the Tower and Sword, deputy sub-armourer at the Tower of London, in which situation he is recognized in these honorary times by the aforesaid title, presents his compliments to the world in general, and begs to inform them, that, in pursuing his professional duties, he lately discovered the manuscript he now takes the liberty of sending to the press. Whether the author was really the Absent Man he delineated himself, and through inattention dropped the precious narrative unknowingly from his pocket, or whether it was designed as a burlesque upon the pleonasm so justly censurable in the fictitious publications of the present day, it is impossible for Sir P. P. to determine. His style of reading being altogether restricted to the origin and history of armorial ensigns, he is precluded from forming any opinion upon

this head; but the slight texture of the manuscript, the improbability of the situations it exhibits, and the disappointment in the catastrophe, are, as he supposes, intended to ridicule the “baseless fabric” of a modern novel; and to show with how much pretension, and how little reason, an expletive may be swelled into the accomplishment of a well rounded period: but as this is a conjectural thesis, Sir P. P. will leave it to the public, upon an investigation into it’s different bearings, to decide the point, merely observing in conclusion, that, after making the most laborious inquiry of which he was capable, no one could be found to own the lost narrative.

Tower of London,

Jan. 1817.

## NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

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SIR PETER PLASTIC begs to inform the world, that, at this interesting period of the Absent Man's narrative, the manuscript is so much injured, as to have become perfectly illegible. Many sheets are totally spoiled apparently by the operation of fire upon the paper. The whole bears evident marks of it's having been written in haste; and for the sake of expedition, it is supposed that the "Absent Man" held the manuscript to the grate, and that, while he might have been thinking of some indifferent affair, it's scorching heat had parched the paper, and extinguished every vestige of the subject matter that before occupied it.

There are, indeed, scarcely two lines of the remaining composition discernible in the same page. In a sheet at a distant part from the one in which the apparent character of the writing closes, may be read the following quotation from Dryden, a little burnt, but tolerably perspicuous.

" \* \* rors like straws upon the \* \* \* \* \* flow,  
He who would search for pearls, must dive below.



The Absent Man's errors are, luckily for him, half obliterated; and the surface of the paper being smoked, this word is consequently extinct.

The next discoverable passage commences with "Fatima Neverspar;" and as the name follows close upon the above verses, it may be inferred, that they were intended to relate to some compliment previously paid to her.

The eye now wanders over many pages of chaos, till these broken sentences appear:

"Oh! gentle Reader? \* \* \* \* \* the anguish of my \* \* \* \* \* as the solemn procession \* \* \* \* \* along the avenue of elms \* \* \* \* \* to the wicket gate of the church yard" \* \* \* \* \* "It was the last earthly \* \* \* \* \* to my Uncle's obsequies. He was a man, take \* \* \* \* \* Job wept bitterly" \* \* \* \* \*

A perplexed and perplexing story closes the manuscript relating to the marriage of some happy pair or other—the names are unfortunately effaced; but a circumstance attending the ceremony seems to have been a good joke: the indistinct fractions, as far as they are capable of construction, refer to the loss, as it appears, of the bridegroom's recollection at a very critical moment; and the word "ring" being written with several notes of exclamation, or

interrogation, it is impossible to detect which expression was intended, leads to the natural conclusion, that it was forgotten on the bridal morning.

Sir Peter Plastic cannot dismiss the subject without expressing his regret, that his numerous professional avocations will not admit of his endeavouring to discover any chemical preparation, by the application of which some of the damaged letters might possibly reassume their original form, and give a better finish to the narrative.

He, however, cannot overcome his original opinion, that the manuscript was intended as a burlesque ; and that the abrupt close of it was chosen to ridicule the unsatisfactory finish of a modern novel : though, as the scorched paper must certainly have been accidental, and again warrants the supposition of it's having been the act of an " Absent Man," he leaves the world to decide the point.

P. P.

Tower of London,  
Jan. 1817.



THE  
ABSENT MAN.

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HAVING been somewhat notorious during my younger days as an Absent Man, a character very probably matured, if not occasioned altogether by a wounded intellect, for the understanding is a fair mark for Love; and as I would “still be harping upon Ophelia;” it may be reasonable to conclude, that I had no time for the digestion and arrangement of those ideas that ordinarily occupy men’s minds, and conduce to the general organization of society (which I learn from the observations of my friends I used frequently to interrupt;) it shall be my

endeavour, now that I have arrived at a more equable line of conduct, to point out the eccentricities I formerly had the credit of committing, and taking all due advantage of a title so apt as that of an "Absent Man," shall hope in any informality or omission, into which I may occasionally be led, to receive the full allowance it will entitle me to solicit.

Thanks, gentle Reader! for your attention to my introductory discourse; and as I am sure you feel considerable impatience to become better acquainted with my state and condition in this laughing world, learn that I am, alas! a widower of the age of —— (as our age is a secret of which we are generally pertinacious, I shall decline filling up this blank.) My means are sufficient for my expenditure; I take the air before breakfast; and never indulge in hot liquors, or warm beds, so that my measure of health is quite as good

as that of my neighbours; and, I think, on the whole, it preserves a more constant standard. The age of the whining school boy passed with me in that invariable transition from grief to joy, or mirth to tears, so common upon a review of the birchen grove, or a return to dulce domum; and, excepting in arithmetic, the dull precision of that science never according with my embryo inclination for an absence of thought, I escaped whipping as often as any of my class, not having suffered the dreaded infliction above twice a week; in those times, before corporeal punishment became so just an object of public reprobation, a very moderate, and, I have no doubt, well merited allowance.

It was the whim of a worthy uncle, under whose guardianship, upon my quitting the vicissitudes I have just described, I was protected and instructed, to consign me in my eighteenth

year to the care of an Hibernian Pastor related to our family on my mother's side; who was accounted a man of worth and ability, and so far capable of a charge from which my uncle was not a little rejoiced to be released. At this nugatory stage of my animal being, thoughtless and inconsiderate, as my general deportment had been, I felt that genuine sadness ever attendant on a separation from the scenes of our earliest recollection. Home possesses a charm, which no lapse of time can efface; and the ideas, that awaken in our memory any traces of our boyish pastimes, are ever among the most pleasurable of our after lives; the departure from the spot itself is painful, and unsatisfactory. I left my uncle's house with a full portion of this feeling, heightened by the conviction of his unceasing care, though I could not but be suspicious of having incurred his disapprobation, and construed my dis-

missal to Ireland into an expression of it. He assured me, however, that his motives had no impulse of this kind, and that my advantage only prompted him to this determination. I tendered him my gratitude, it was all I had, in requital of his guardian love, and with a tear of which I was not ashamed, embarked with favouring gales for the Irish coast, taking his blessing freely given.

Although my aberrations were now beginning to be observable, I well remember the gratification with which I beheld, after a passage, rendered tedious by the first sufferings of a freshwater sailor, (who as yet had only experienced the gentle undulations of a large tench pond) the opening view of the bay of Dublin. The night, which had been ruled by the fierce spirit of the storm, now vanished at the calm approach of returning morning; and just as we descried the point of land



called Ireland's Eye, the sun arose in all his splendour, and irradiated with wonderful effect the various mansions, that surround that beautiful city. Each spire and pinnacle claimed it's share in the general effulgence, and glittered beneath the gray and misty ridge of the impending Wicklow mountains.

Our vessel floating gently on the azure wave, till the flow of the tide served for us to get over the bar, enabled us to discover at each tack new scenery. The honest joy of an unsophisticated Irishman (who was returning to the land of his fathers after a service of manual toil in the vicinity of London) upon the evaporation of the fog from the church of St. Patrick, made a pleasing addition to the group of the picture.

All nature seemed to hail the joyous break of light, and the beauties of the creation commanded their full triumph in this delightful panorama. Favour-

able as was this introduction to the Isle of Erin, I was by no means inclined to reverse the impression, upon surveying the public buildings of it's capital.

Free from that unsightly film of long-collected dirt, which destroys the appearance of our London edifices, the uncontaminated stone rises in all the beauty of architectural proportion, and forms the most striking elevations, destitute of the cloudy covering of our metropolitan temples. Here I conclude my eulogy; the sun must go down, and the sequel of my narrative will never be attained, unless we descend into the shadowy side of the canvass.

My road from Dublin to Athlone in the county of Westmeath, the place of my destination, lay through a long succession of uninteresting bog-land interrupted only by the miserable villages upon it; a lamentable diver-

sity, and byt ill calculated to prolong the prepossessions of the traveller, inseparable from a view of the Bay.

This journey was accomplished through the good services of an Irish post-chaise, the workmanship of which being peculiar to that country, I shall attempt a description of it.

The body of this vehicle was by no means equilateral, a sinuous excrescence obtruding itself on the dexter side, for the support of the pannel, whereupon was emblazoned in all the modesty of white chalk, the ostentatious patronymic of the Master of the Shamrock Inn. The wheels were of various thickness, and picked out with an agreeable intermixture of the different soils over which they had travelled for the last ten years. The carriage might probably have received an equal coat of paint when first launched, but the drawing operation of the sun had long since blistered

it's surface, and dispersed the component parts of the colour into all the hues of a marble paper. The concretion of mould and rust on the leathern roof of this venerable vehicle had never been expunged by the application of any unctuous matter, so that it assumed a doubtful dye corresponding with the diversity of the body. The material defect of the conveyance, however, consisted in the porous culender above me, miscalled a roof; an excellence to which, in spite of several tufts of straw interwoven with much art, it had no kind of pretension; inso-much, that as the day proved as rainy as the calendar of St. Swithin, I was obliged to expand an umbiella over my head, and even then endured it's dripping into a pair of boots, which like the pipes of an engine held the supply most retentively. The two horses, not a pair, to this complete equipage, were in their condition and caparison

perfectly in'harmony with it; nor was the unstudied attire of their driver, (an Irishman six feet in height) the least attractive part of the array; who, as the composer of the harness, had patronized the manufacture of twine in preference to that of leather, and formed the reticulated traces by the aid of a ball of string.

The inns on the road were generally of the most pitiful description, and in unison with the chaises they kept, so that a painter might have discovered a corresponding tone throughout. Inquiring of a sturdy landlady of Kilbeggan, what I could have for dinner, "O please your honour, I've some elegant eggs and bacon, but no other meat in the house," was the reply; and having no sort of objection to her bill of fare, though I had yet to discover wherein it's elegance consisted, I ordered the dish with all expedition.

It being market day at Kilbeggan, I amused myself the meanwhile by noticing the arrival of the neighbouring peasantry, who flocked in great numbers to the town, and displayed their pigs and poultry to a population apparently unable to offer them the moderate prices at which their articles were valued. The principal street now exhibited a curious medley of people, more unincumbered by the foppery of dress than I had hitherto seen, and wading through a thick mass of mud, without any apprehension for the genuine black and white of their shoes and stockings. In truth they wore neither, and a large folding gray coat or cloak formed the principal appendage of either sex. The musical cadences of the suckling grunTERS imparted to the scene a degree of spirit, from which nothing but the remembrance of the "elegant eggs and bacon" could have torn me; and Don

Quixote himself never left his Dulcinea del Toboso with greater remorse, than I did the obstreperous vespers that assailed me upon Kate's kissing her pig.

After my repast, the elegance of the table bearing a strict conformity to that of the provision, my hostess, with an apologetical sentence for interrupting "his honour," invoked me by all the saints in Ireland to taste her whiskey; assuring me that it had proved her main support, through a series of unparalleled misfortunes. (I afterward discovered that she had lately buried her third husband.) I complied with her solicitation, but did penance for my transgression in all the horrors of a violent head-ache. This national liquor, strongly impregnated with the smoke of the turf used in it's distillation, possesses the most insinuating qualities, not detected at the time, from the scientific admix-

ture of my landlady's favourite potation, which gave it that pleasant softness, so conquering, yet so insidious, with "long life to your honour," the usual benediction.

I proceeded on my route to Athlone. My driver being asked what kind of place it was, he replied, "Och it's an elegant town, an' please your honour." I soon found that this favoured epithet was used indiscriminately upon all occasions, and that the Irish had an habitual practice, by means of it, of extolling far beyond their respective merits, any subjects connected with the economy of their own country; so that an "elegant pig," "elegant potatoes," "elegant cheese," "elegant roads," and the like incongruous phrases, soon became familiar parts of speech, and the ear was deafened to the absurdity of them. I observed, as I passed along the road, that it was scattered with groups of



the most wretched beings I had ever beheld; and, indeed, I had not thought there were any such in the creation. I am not speaking of those alone, who, reduced by pressing want, claimed a scanty pittance from the charitable stranger, but of that peculiar description of unfortunate people, who also laboured under natural infirmities the most horrific. Some, with scarcely a limb in it's due proportion or place, were wheeled into the highway, to court that charity they had no power of utterance to solicit; others exposing an inveterate sore to excite compassion; and many, destitute of sufficient covering, lay stretched along the sward, a prey to poverty and despair.

Even in this particular I traced the fatal consequences of that distaste for native soil, which has laid the foundation of calamities, Ireland will long have occasion to lament. Uninstructed

by the example of those, whose high station, and personal authority, would be productive of the happiest results ; and destitute of that fostering care so successful in the management of our English peasantry ; the Irish poor are abandoned by their superiors, and left under all the agonies of an imperative necessity, to depend upon the uncertain boon of the traveller, or endure the exactions of a middle class, with whom feeling is subservient to interest ; and who, considering the attainment of rent as the means of perpetuating their employer's patronage, become insensible to every other appeal. In this abstraction of thought, I reached the domains in the neighbourhood of Athlone.

It may be proper to state, that every residence at all superior to a cottage is distinguished in Ireland as a domain, and "elegant domains" are therefore as common as "elegant bacon."

The face of the country was now improved by some rude plantations of ash and evergreens, and the monotony of the scene a little varied by a casual appearance of foliage and cultivation.

A raised terrace formed the approach to the town, commanding an extensive meander of the celebrated Shannon, over whose surface the departing luminary shed his corruscations broad and strong.

Whatever might have been my distaste for the part of the country over which I had travelled, it was heightened upon viewing the grotesque figure of the personage, of whom I was in search. His reception of me was, however, so hospitable and unaffected, that I hold it most wise to refrain from giving a sketch of his person.

His hat I conclude to have been of his own choice, and I may therefore say, that the flaps, sometimes so

carefully confined in the embrace of a satin rosette, were here the sport of the playful zephyr, and occasionally formed both parasol and umbrella. His coat, being bronzed by the sooty exhalation of the chimney corner, afforded no attraction to the solar ray; and his ample hose appeared to be made for the parish, rather than for the parson.

Not less amused with his vernacular idiom, than pleased with various instances of an affability rarely to be excelled, I passed my time partly employed in the improvement of my education, and partly occupied in arresting the finny brood on their passage through the far-flowing Shannon, a diversion in which my deputed guardian particularly excelled, till a period arrived—yes, kind Reader, a period, a full stop to my learning, my fishing, my thinking, my talking, my reasoning, my acting as other people did.

It was then I became confessed "An Absent Man!" It was there I began those direful mistakes I shall from time to time develope to you. It was there I saw ——

My reverend tutor had an only daughter, who, during the early stages of my introduction and acquaintance at her father's house, had been prosecuting those accomplishments at an establishment in Dublin, which were now her own ornament, and her sex's envy.

She returned in all the buoyancy of youthful spirits, relieved from the restraint of scholastic admonition, and tinctured with the romantic notions of sixteen, to superintend the domestic duties from which her mother had by an early affliction been taken. It was there I saw

That magic queen whose presence fix'd my eye,  
And made a chaos of consistency!

Her form was of that due mean be

tween short and tall, which at once exhibits the most accurate proportion, and would, from a beau, at first sight, command the trite observation of a "devilish fine girl, 'pon my soul." Neither oppressed by an incumbrance of what is generally called fat, nor unable from a deficiency of it, to prevent the obtrusion of bone, the development of which is not within the received acceptation of a perfect beauty; her figure moved in all the graces of unstudied elegance: her dark eye contained a magnet, that constantly drew me within it's focus; while the jetty gloss of her loose flowing hair formed just that contrast to the ivory palace that appeared through her smile, which was requisite to the effect of both.

Such was the outline of Nora Cavannah, the only daughter of my Irish tutor, and now the only hope of "An Absent Man."

*Reader.*, What, in love on the instant?

*Absent Man.* Yes, kind Sir, or kind Madam, at first sight; and if you are dissatisfied at the effect, remember the probable cause: Nora was thoughtless and young; I was thoughtless and young; and if this be not sufficient excuse, recollect that I have already warned you of the failings of an "Absent Man;" and if you expect a well-arranged, methodical disposition of the six and twenty letters that compose my narrative, you will most indubitably be disappointed. I shall forbear from explaining the how, the where, the when; nor shall I enter upon an enumeration of the sighs, glances, and little rogueries, that led to my surrender.

The death-blow of the fatal archer is to be found from Milton downwards, and even Tom Thumb drinks the delicious poison of his Dollalolla's eye.

Suffice it therefore to say,<sup>3</sup> that Nora Cavannah robbed me of my heart, and that I gloried in the surreptitious loss of it!

A short lapse of time, and the opportunities I embraced of studying her disposition, soon enabled me to discover in Nora Cavannah a decidedly romantic turn of mind, which I slightly noticed upon her arrival at Athlone; and this propensity increasing with every recurrence to theories as wild as illusory, and strengthened by an indulgence in the authors of visionary scenes, became at length so imperative, that she yielded implicit obedience to the inclination she had cherished, and paid that homage to the usurper, Fancy, which belonged aright to the legitimate empire of Reason.

An ivy-mantled tower overpeering a craggy amphitheatre of granite; a pale declining moon, half-clouded,



half-revealed ; the impetuous roar of the rapid cataract beneath, edged with a sparkling silvery foam, impelled to it's own destruction ; the time-bleached withered trunk of a barren oak, once the monarch of the woods, now the solitary cavern of the frantic Musidora ; the pleasing melancholy wail of that lone bird, which gives it's sorrows to the listening breeze, and ushers in the reign of night, her fairer season ; the poisoned dagger ; the relentless sire ; the fearful apparition of a devoted saint, checking the death-determined measure of despair ! with the whole phalanx of romantic imagery, alone captivated her, and were alone pursued. The force of example, aided by the fascination of the lovely paragon by whom it was offered, effectually exerted it's influence over an " Absent Man !" and by degrees I became as romantic as the fair model before me, in whom perfection ap-

peared to be centred, and whose beauty enslaved my ideas ! If she had any defects, I was blind to them as Love ; her voice was enchantment, and her absence became insupportable. Often would I listen to the melodious whisper of her attachment, and often would I assure myself of the probability of my fictitious page, where two fond hearts after a series of adventures spun out into four volumes, are united at the altar, and “ all is well ! ” till at length I became that “ Absent Man ” I shall now depict.

Charity, when exercised in it's true spirit, is so nearly allied to love, that my delight at the following narrative will readily be believed.

The hut of a neighbouring poor family became the object of a morning's walk, on a fine autumnal day, when the woodland scenery, though intersected by the partial gloom which at the close of the year pervades the

atmosphere, shone in all the richness and warmth that raise Claude above his competitors in mellowness of tint and glow of tone. With this superiority Nature was before us in a landscape of her own dye! The construction of the mud edifices of the children of St. Patrick is so devoid of all the hacknied rules of architectural embellishment, and so dissimilar to the cottages of our English peasantry, that I shall insert a description of the one we visited.

Close on the road side we approached a small low dwelling, made entirely of the soil which had been dug up for it's formation; and the vacancy, not having been otherwise supplied, was filled by a stagnant pool in the front of the house, through which it became necessary to pass to gain an entrance. The door to this humble abode most successfully answered also the use that is commonly with us.

assigned to the chimney ; and, it's good offices not yet accomplished, actually precluded the necessity of a window, by admitting the rays of light to play between the lintel and threshold : so that, whether open or closed, it acted in a triple capacity, and unlike the ponderous valves of the miser's castle, never creaked at the voice of want. One common apartment answered all the diurnal economy, whether at the time of culinary occupation, or otherwise ; nor was it deserted at the close of the day, and the favourite pig, who shared also the potato repast, reposed in the " parlour, kitchen, and hall," with the rest of the family. The early Chanticleer roosted with his mates in the sooty thatch, and awoke them at the dawn of morn. .

I remember at this period to have been highly entertained with an account an English soldier was giving his comrades of the accommodation

of his billet, and which *I happened*' to overhear. His mirth and ridicule upon telling them, that when he arose he discovered an old sow chained to the bed-post, and that the Sergeant could not gain admittance, to pay for his night's lodging, until he had disturbed a brindled cow, who, he said, was on guard all night, were so indicative of the superiority he felt in his own barrack over these fortuitous quarters, that I shall never forget the satirical expression of his countenance.

Thus, with every appearance of outward wretchedness, how surprising it was to behold the ruddy countenances, and robust forms, of the rude race that came out to meet us, in scarcely any other covering than what a large gray cloak, hiding a few tattered rags, supplied. The mother of six infants, with a face indicating health and contentment, and a form well calculated to bear the burden.

*and heat of the day, seemed perfectly unconscious of her hard lot; and with an expression that conveyed the sense of her gratitude, more than an acknowledgment of her wants, cheerfully blessed Nora for the treasures she distributed among the hale and hearty generation around her.*

We were now three Irish miles from our domain, and I observed, that the gloom in which we began our expedition thickened around us. The Sun retired from our sight, and a rapid succession of red and angry clouds obscured the horizon, portending an approaching storm! Nora grew pale! the vivid lightning flashed by her! the blackening clouds increased! a sudden and terrific crash accompanied the fall of a venerable elm, that had withstood the shock of a thousand tempests, and under its umbrageous circumference protected the peasant's hut from the scorching rays of many a summer's sun.

My apprehension for Nora Cavanah was dreadful ! I fancied her the victim of the storm ! torn from my arms by the ruthless blast, and expiring at my feet ! The concussion of the earth opened to her a ready grave ! I saw her ingulfed ! fell to the ground ! and kissed the cold clod that had deprived me of my love ! my solace ! my ——

Ah ! gentle Reader ! I see the sympathizing tear coursing down thy humid cheek ; let it not crystallize ! but absorb the sentimental moisture with the mouchoir of consolation.

It is true that Nora fainted ; but it is also true, that a few opportune drops “ from the green mantle of the stagnant pool,” recovered her again.

The raging horror subsided, and a convenient potato car passing by the hovel, I placed my restored mistress on the propitious vehicle ; taking the reins from honest Teague, who, having experienced some trouble with his

Rosinante during the late tumult, readily complied with my request.

We had proceeded smoothly for the first two miles, when my ill-starred absence led to the catastrophe that follows :

It suddenly occurred to me that I had no tenpennies wherewith to remunerate my hero of the esculent root, and laying the reins of his steed by my side, took a note from my pocket-book for that purpose. The quadruped had now an undivided command, and I verily believe he would not have abused his authority, but for an instantaneous return of the elemental shock !

This unforeseen calamity urged him on at the utmost speed, and before I could impart to my unnerved sinews any muscular force, Crop gained the ascendancy, and kept it.

Fancy us now at a full Gretna



pace, and in jeopardy for our very lives.

Cavannah, who had been in a state of agitation during the pitiless storm, had resolved to follow our footsteps; and the good man came out to meet his only daughter—not thankfully returning in safety to her father's shelter; not smiling peace, joy, and love; but wrapped in the coarse mantle of her pensioner, exposed on a rough potato-car, and borne along by the headstrong obstinacy of an infuriate brute.

Anxious to give him an opportunity of caressing his preserved fondling, I hastily jumped from the car; forgetting in my confusion, that as the horse still proceeded with the utmost rapidity, it would be quite impossible for Cavannah to take my place by his daughter's side.

The spot where I alighted was over-

shadowed by impending boughs of thick holly, which deprived me of my hat, and fringed my cravat in dishevelled shreds.

Thus circumstanced I met the distracted parent of my Nora. He ejaculated, "Robber, where is my child?" I confusedly replied, "The storm! the storm!" "Ha! is she then gone for ever!" said Cavannah. "Yes," said I, "with a potato merchant. Barbarous horse to bear my love away!"

Just now, Cavannah taking out his snuff-box, I threw a full pinch of the real Lundyfoot into my right eye, meaning no doubt to have gratified another sense.

All explanation became inconvenient, and some moments were lost in utter dismay on both sides.

At length I convinced my dejected friend, that our hope might be yet alive; but that the only way to ascertain the fact was to repair with all

haste to the town whither the car had proceeded; and having hung my hat on it's proper block, after a short lapse of time, we learnt that the maddened beast very naturally halted upon arriving at his master's hut; and that my angelic Nora had been landed at her father's house, in no worse condition than I had left her.

The circumstances of this, and of the following adventures, were the more impressed upon my changeful mind by the jocularities of my friends; to avoid which, it was my custom to note these extravagancies in a small book I kept for the purpose. Their review seldom proved of much advantage in the earlier days of my pilgrimage; though I am now enabled, by aid of the manuscript, to expose my own errors, and laugh at them in my turn.

My ideas were scarcely recovered from the shock of our potato rencontre, when an invitation to dine

at Crazy Castle, the ancient domain of the O'Carols, arrived, and was accepted.

From the account I had heard of the hospitality of this respectable family, I anticipated "a pleasant day;" and any other than "An Absent Man," who had passed the morning in following Montmorenci through his adventurous progress, would have enjoyed it.

The O'Carols are a numerous and thriving generation, deriving their descent from the earliest rulers of the Hibernian soil, and quartering with the Bulls; a race celebrated for their indigenous attachment time out of mind.

The approach to Crazy Castle was cut through a dense avenue of chestnuts and limes, the safe retreat of the cawing tribe that inhabited it; and opening on a large quadrangular edifice, with battlements and breastworks,

in the style of an ancient fortification. The building had been lately repaired by the worthy Mr. O'Carol coming into possession of the estate, and no expense was spared in it's decoration.

Had the domain been situate in a less disturbed part of the country, I should have considered the works in a more pleasing light ; but when I was given to understand, that the proprietor could never risk an exposure of his person beyond the boundary of his park-paling unarmed or unattended ; and even thus defended, thought it necessary to the preservation of his life, to embattle himself before the reign of twilight, I confess that I felt not the least inclination to " covet my neighbour's goods ;" though I could not but admire - that indifference to personal security, which led him to improve the land of his fathers ; and conduced to the ex-

penditure of his riches where the circulation of money was attended by such beneficial results.

A long line of ancestry, identified by explanatory scrolls, and guarded by frames, perforated with the network of many ages, hung around the lofty Gothic hall, to which we entered under a massive porch bearing the family arms and insignia.

The fatal scene at the bridge of Wexford, together with several portraits of distinguished Irish patriots, who had aided in checking the rebellion, occupied the walls of the anti-room; where I observed that the shamrock had been introduced in the antique oaken furniture, and was carved in relievo upon the cornices and architraves around the apartment.

Patrick O'Carol, esq., his lady, and two daughters, received us with unaffected cordiality, introducing us to their several guests, and completely

dissipating by their easy manners that irksome awkwardness so observable in my own country circles during the half hour previous to dinner.

Mr. O'Carol apologized to me for the absence of his sons, who he said were employed, as he himself had been in his earlier days, in the service of their country; and paid me that attention so peculiarly pleasing, because it is of one soil alone.

Urbanity here gained the ascendancy over a cold unmeaning politeness; and I pictured to myself, ever, in imitation of Nora, on the wing of romance, that cordial feast, the pride of former days, when even an enemy was welcomed at the board; and the was-sail shout gave to the roof of Gothic tracery an 'echo of the joy below. But, alas! an accident soon ~~ruined~~ <sup>ruined</sup> my illusive dreams of happiness.

The saloon was adorned with all "the rich and rare" of modern taste;

and as I was examining a curious foreign clock, that stood on the chimney-piece of Sienna marble, Miss O'Carol requested me to reach a vase of pomegranates by it's side. I had grasped it immediately, but delayed presenting the flowers one minute, as Cupid had just led on old Time to strike the hour. This minute was my ruin ! I eagerly examined the mechanism, and forgetting that I held the vase in my hand, witnessed 'the blow, and suddenly extending my arm with all the emphasis of "how exquisite !" a bust of king William mouldered in the ashes ; and the fatal overthrow of a Parian Venus holding seven lights, completed the misery of an "Absent Man ;" which the philosophical patience of Mrs. O'Carol could in no degree abate.

I saw that the downfall of king William, of glorious and immortal me-



*mory, which had ever been held in the highest veneration by him, caused my worthy host a violent pang. The fall of a Venus was a matter of no moment in comparison with it. But the indignity offered to the semblance of the great and good king William, "who left him the house of Hanover as a legacy," was a lapse he could not as yet recover. He, however, merely said, that the bust was considered a fine likeness, and hoped he might be able to replace it before his death, that he might not leave the Castle unguarded.*

Mrs. O'Carol's fortitude was extraordinary. Many ladies of my acquaintance would have uttered a much sharper philippic on the destruction of a Wedgwood ewer.

She had learnt, she said, to consider such casualties as mere trifles, ever since the fraction of an ancient goblet, the preservation of which, upon a

*trial of it's virtues, had been held by a superstitious great grandmother as indicative of her own salvation, as it's dismemberment would have been ominous of evil.*

Now that the fragile hope was broken, Mrs. O'Carol smiled at grief, beholding the scattered limbs of the queen of beauty with the most amiable unconcern.

Could I have imparted to the incinerated king, that quality the phoenix is supposed to possess, I should have attended the summons to the banqueting-room with more composure; but with an appetite for nothing so much as oblivion, I speedily heard the dinner announced. It certainly diverted my ideas, not arranged them. The first course, however, went off without a fault; but after the anatomical division of the legs of a partridge, an old bird, I was attending to the conversation, which just then turned upon

the value of an ancient plate, when I covered the game with a delicious custard, which I had inadvertently mistaken for bread sauce !

Miss O'Carol was now distributing a rich trifle to her admiring guests, and offered me a share, at the same moment that her hospitable father pledged me in a bumper of Canary ! I turned the sparkling juice into the porous vessel from which I had filled it ; and unconsciously endeavoured to regale myself upon the trifle through the medium of a two-pronged fork.

So quick a succession of calamities created a stifled titter among the ladies, and Nora Cavannah, who, sitting opposite to me, was doubtless the innocent cause of all my woe, perfected my confusion by joining in the laugh.

I thrice wished myself on a level with the formless king William, or that a sudden convulsion of nature might incarcerate my trembling phy-

siognomy, although nothing could exceed the good manners of the head of the O'Carol family; till I rashly quitted my seat, for the purpose of picking up a fan dropped by the lady of the house.

Judge, gentle Reader! of my astonishment, when you hear that I brought the whole paraphernalia of the table to the ground, having fastened the cloth to my button-hole, for the preservation of a treacherous white waistcoat!

This disorder of studied forms acted with electrical effect upon the whole company; what to me was a shock, with them ran off in laughter, and the authority of O'Carol himself became ineffectual in the restoration of harmony. Time alone could produce it; and the arrangement of the dessert contributed in effecting this desirable event.

Where a person particularly wishes

to shine in his manners and deportment, it generally happens that he is mortified in his attempt; and from an over-anxiety to display his accomplishments, he not unfrequently falls into the opposite extreme.

This was precisely my case. I felt ambitious of being thought a suitor of Nora Cavannah; and doubly so, of discovering to her friends such a knowledge of society, and observance of it's rules, as might lead them to view in me the participator of their friendship, and the partner of their Nora's happiness!

I now resolved to prevent a recurrence of disasters, by refraining from any enjoyment of the luxuries before me.

This intermission of hostilities produced an abstracted train of thought, which disembodied itself in the following sentence :

“ Suppose,” said I to Mrs. O'Carol,

“that the disk of the Sun should spread it's corruscations on the inflammable parts of aërial bodies, what quantity of solar heat would it require, to peel the mastich from the ribs of a balloon in a nubilous region 12 degrees below the freezing point?”

The solution of this interrogatory might probably have been attended with some little difficulty; but Mrs. O'Carol, instead of attempting it, retired with the ladies into the saloon; and I preserved a profound silence, drinking only one bumper to the “immortal memory,” until we joined their party.

The dismantled chimney-piece now again renewed the remembrance of my late errors, and the dusty sepulture of the good king awoke in me the most distressing recollections.

This was indeed a day of sorrows, where in my Nora's company I had anticipated a feast of joy, and in that

of the O'Carols uninterrupted satisfaction!

Coffee being served, of which I dared not to partake, the music books were thrown open, and the fine finger of Nora Cavannah electrified the audience with delight! The dullest sounds of her soul-inspiring voice spread a gratification around, which I alone was unable to express.

In mute admiration of her art, I crept enraptured to the piano-forte; when Miss O'Carol was requested to accompany Nora in the touching duet of "Drink to me only with thine eyes."

The butler was now handing a salver of liqueurs; and just as I took the rich fluid from the embossed stand, I caught the dark eye of Cavannah's daughter! who repeating the burden of the song, caused such an implicit obedience to her commands, that I deliberately reddened my cravat with the

juice, totally unconscious of having any liquid in my glass.

*The beautiful maid began to play;*  
 “When Absent,” and I retired to the solitude of the window overwhelmed by my misfortunes!

I am not aware of any other enormity I committed, till we retired; when starting from my reverie, I took leave of the O’Carol family, and very coolly thanked them for the honour they had conferred upon me in quitting Crazy Castle to visit so unworthy a person.

Nora smiled again; and Cavannah during our ride home, asked me seriously, if I had not some of the blood of the Bulls in my composition? and hinted, that it appeared to be in a direct, rather than a collateral line.

On the following morning, I felt the necessity of making some apology for my extraordinary want of conduct at Crazy Castle, and wrote this dis-



*patch, hoping to convince the O'Carol family, that accident, not design, had occasioned it.*

I felt very sensibly the ludicrous recollection, which must ever be coupled with a review of my indecorous inattention, and addressed Mrs. O'Carol as much to ensure her favourable mention of me to Nora, as to bring about her own reconciliation.

MADAM,

THE events of yesterday, ominous in their origin, and fatal, I fear, in their consequences, have materially indisposed me. A nervous debility has seized on all my limbs, and in your kindness alone can I expect to find that opiate so indispensable to my existence. Heal, Madam, I implore you, the wounded feelings of a guilty, yet penitent criminal; and suffer a miserable, though patient offender, again to be restored to the sun-shine of

your favour, that he may no longer be considered an

“ ABSENT MAN.”

This pathetic appeal would doubtless have been honoured by an equivalent sympathy on the part of the forgiving Mrs. O'Carol; but I addressed my letter to Phelim O'Bolus, the eminent empiric of a neighbouring hamlet! It produced the following prescription from a well-meaning doctress, who unquestionably took me for a party in a late duel, fought in the county of Roscommon, on account of a *Faire Ladye*; and I felicitated myself on a perusal of her cure, that I did not stand in need of her advice.

“ Mrs. Judy O'Bolus, in the absence of her nephew Phelim, who is not out of the house, advises the gentleman who is mortally wounded, to get up and take the opiate she will

send to-morrow, exactly one hour by the clock, after he has fallen into a *profound sleep to-night.*

The patient must bind up his wounds, when they have ceased to bleed, with two ells of the yard of tape, looking at them every twenty minutes to keep the air out; and be careful to take plenty of food, as nourishment will be the death of him.

If his honour does not mend, Phelim shall come over the day before he writes, to let him know how he is.

Mrs. Judy never knew any good of these duels to kill people, for the sake of their lives."

The doctor's intended letter was of course directed to Mrs. O'Carol, and ran as follows :

SIR,

HAVING heard of your skill in phlebotomy, I shall be obliged by your

opening a vein for me, at the house of the Rev. Arthur Cavannah, to morrow morning. I have of late been troubled with a considerable disorganization of my perceptive faculties, partly arising from a romance fever, which has left me in an undeterminable condition, deviating into measures hitherto unattempted, and attempting measures that have led to the deviation of,

Sir,

Your most obliged

very humble servant,

"AN ABSENT MAN."

Mrs. O'Carol was not at a loss to unriddle the author of this epistle; but fully agreeing in the observations it contained, as to the pressing necessity for some reformation in the system, wrote a strong remonstrance to Cavannah to watch my movements, and recommended a metastasis in case of farther symptoms.

Whatever is related in any shape to fashion, is sure to find an immediate list of votaries; and considering the paucity of amusements in a dull insulated town, it was fortunate that nothing more absurd than an aquatic excursion to Hare Island, a small cover for game on the river Shannon, was the fashion at Athlone.

Any thing that might lead to the delights of an adventure, an incident, which I ought, from my refractory ideas, studiously to have avoided, always gave me the most invigorating prospects. No sooner was the plan in agitation, than I saw the boat buoyant on the translucent stream, the pure cerulean cloud reflected on its sleepy surface, and Nora, like a second Cleopatra, chiding the delay of her Antony.

Wafted to the expecting shore by Love's ambassadress, fair Hope! the rich argosy was mine, and the gold of Peru could not have purchased it from me.

To be more plain: a convenient vessel was hired by Cavannah; and with a party from the garrison, we embarked, as fashion prompted, for our sequestered islet.

The banks of the Shannon preserved that unvaried monotony, of which I have before complained, in the face of the country. But the object I had in view presented to my enraptured imagination a prospect, that no climate could enhance.

Nora was by my side! and the hours of our voyage were as moments in my calendar of time.

We now discovered the island, and the river expanding itself into the form of an irregular bay. We caught a fresher breeze, which rapidly carried our sail into the rocky harbour, that jutted out from the rude brushwood, which fringed the border of the water.

Our party were safely conducted

over some large rolling stones to the terrace on the shore, by the attention of the active boatmen, who had their full share of the national politeness to the fair sex: and we proceeded to explore the thickets and coppices that surrounded us.

A narrow serpentine path led to a rustic bench, where some fond swain had revealed his secret sorrows in the following pensive strains; an humble imitation of a celebrated Irish melody, and coming, I presume, from an itinerant artist, who, as a man of genius, was necessarily addicted to snuff!

“ When in death I shall close my eyes,  
 O bear this box to Kitty Macquire ;  
 Tell her there's reason for little surprise,  
 For die we must, who are lingering here.

Bid her not take one pinch of rappee.  
 To sully a visage so white, and so red,  
 But keep the relic in honour of me :  
 To catch her salt tears at going to bed.

When the light of my landscape's o'er,  
 O bear my easel, and hang it high;  
 Place the paintings behind the door,  
 That shadow may cheat the critic eye.

Then if some Claude to save his bacon,  
 Revive as he passes their softness of tone,  
 O let one sketch of the master awaken  
 His warmest smile for the painter gone.

Take this keg that's with whiskey flowing,  
 And quaff the nectar when I'm inurn'd;  
 Never! O never! a drop bestowing,  
 On lips with fever that seldom burn'd.

But if some warm expiring lover  
 To her, who rejects him, shall bumpers raise,  
 Around the goblet my spirit shall hover,  
 And hallow the punch in his Shelah's praise."

Our attention was now directed to an ornamental cottage, which, standing on the summit of the island, commanded an extensive view, beyond the foreground plantations, over the azure tide that environed us.

A rustic piazza of irregular trunks of



trees, the remaining branches of which supported the intertwining tendrils of the clematis and Irish-joy, encircled the dwelling; and a nicely fabricated thatch of reeds, which formed it's roof, was carried over the colonnade, to defend it from the penetrating rays of the sun.

The casement windows were adorned with some curious specimens of finely coloured glass of rare antiquity; and I was pleased to find, that their original simple form had been preferred to a barbarous introduction of that spurious gothic, which destroys the idea of a cottage, and so universally disfigures the modern elevation of a rural abode.

As this picturesque building was the occasional resort of the family to whom the island belonged, several rooms were furnished with great taste for their accommodation.

A convex glass was placed in the

vestibule, and reduced the opposite scenery into the most agreeable dimensions, giving back the foliage and sky with the beautiful modulations of a miniature painting.

Several well executed drawings of the Bay of Dublin, and a romantic delineation of the Lakes of Killarney, taken at the fall of the leaf, were, with a small library, the chief decorations of the interior, where a neat elegance seemed very probably to be the principal object.

As Nora was amusing herself with a playful kitten, whose gambols were uncontrolled by the authority of any other inhabitant, the rest of the party loitered in that happy ease, which bespoke their pleasure in the scene around them: excepting Cavanaugh, who had estranged himself from the reigning inactivity with a religious disquisition he had taken from the library table into the seclusion of a

rural seat, made of extended roots, and overshadowed by a thick bower of odoriferous woodbine.

The situation of the different groups was altogether unexceptionable; if, however, there was "any craving void left aching in the breast," it arose from the circumstance of our having forgotten to bring two ample hampers of provision, which we had with all due care prepared for our entertainment.

This omission, gentle Reader! you may conclude, was the fault of an "Absent Man;" but the ideal agitation of placing Nora's agile form so as to trim the boat in due equilibrium, naturally enough occupied my entire thoughts; and the charge of the portable larder should not have been confided to one, whose appetite was romance, and who, with perfect satisfaction, partook of the *cameleon's dish*!

There were some of our party, who, requiring a more substantial aliment,

requested me to be their caterer, in recompense for the loss I had occasioned them.

Robinson Crusoe's Island was as fruitful of hope, as our present station! Hips and blackberries were poor substitutes for collared eel and pigeon pie! and the crystal stream, a meagre succedaneum for the Falernian juice I had left behind me!

In this dilemma, I wandered into an opposite direction from the one pursued upon our arrival, till, as the song says,

“ I knew by the smoke, that so gracefully curl'd  
Above the green elms, that a cottage was near.”

This cheering vapour was emitted from a crackling faggot, over which an industrious housewife had suspended an immense caldron of Paddy's best food, potatoes!

I prepared my honest dame for the reception of her unexpected guests, and without considering, whether I

had not been accosting a Weird Sister, who had some dreadful incantation in embryo, I flew, like Columbus, to proclaim the discovery of my unknown people, and speedily conducted the party to the mealy delights of their indigenous feast.

A clean oaken board groaned beneath the pile of smoaking roots, and four wooden platters, the stock of the buffet, with a small paper of salt, were laid out in due regularity.

The good hostess of our caravansary became satisfied, that "great folk" can upon occasion devour potatoes; and the knot of the oak was soon again discoverable on the cleared table. She most obligingly offered us a drink of butter-milk, in lieu of the Falernian, which now most provokingly lay wrapped in cooling cucumber leaves; but we deferred allaying our thirst until a more congenial beverage might be at our command :

and requiting the poor islander for her exertions, found ourselves in a short time, by a circuitous pathway, that skirted the woods, in possession of our first resting place.

Cavannah, whose dogmatical research had till now fastened him to the honeysuckle bower, appeared in pensive mood slowly tracking the mazes that led to the painter's temple; when Nora, like the nimble roe, bounded to her fond father, and urged him to accelerate his footsteps, as her friends were apprehensive, that the brilliance of the day was about to be commuted into that appearance, which Mr. Moore emphatically describes by "flying showers now about," and wished to take water with all expedition.

Her persuasive eloquence would, like the musician of old, have moved mountains, and Cavannah joined us

with a velocity, of which I had not thought him capable.

We repaired with "*more wet*" on our almanac, and "*much rain*" on our barometer, to the attendant boatmen, who feelingly rued the abandonment of the two hampers, and agreed with us, that our glass was at best at "changeable."

Woman! the solace of our lives! the sine qua non of our happiness! the instructress of our infancy! the joy of our prime! the support of our age!

"When pain and anguish wring the brow,  
A ministering angel thou!"

But what art thou in a party of pleasure on the water in bad weather? Very much in the way.

A sudden squall had, upon our quitting terra firma, most unpropitiously sprung up, and given a con-

siderable motation to the agitated stream.

The ladies were immediately convinced, that the boat must be sacrificed to the gust of wind, which certainly huffed a little in our sail.

Cavannah, who was our steersman, gave all his rhetoric to the storm; for when ladies have once made up their minds, it becomes no easy matter to reverse the impression, and a general hopelessness was the order of the day.

The Æolian murmurs increased; wave succeeded wave; and the hollow ominous boding of a flight of rooks, who now passed over our struggling bark, added to the gloominess of the scene.

Dangerous as would have been the experiment, I believe that the affrighted females would have preferred an aërostatic passage to Athlone, to the perils of the water, if it could have been obtained; but patience, a better confidence in Cavannah's nautical



skill, and a steady adherence to the seat of the boat, were all the consolations that offered

The squall continued; the *elemental moisture descended as from a water spout*, and the eddying watercourses tossed the boat from shore to shore!

Nora, who behaved with the utmost intrepidity, at this critical moment espied anook, into which it was deemed possible that we might, by great exertion, direct our disordered bark.

Seeing how materially this measure would promote her comfort, ever my first ambition! I hastily essayed to spring by one bold vault into a lap of sedges, that vegetated on a neighbouring bank; but I failed in my attempt! and had the mortification to find myself prostrate on the bed of the river! By losing my balance, the boat lost also it's equipoise. It upset in the squall! and the whole cargo, following the pernicious example of

an "Absent Man," pressed the rushy couch of the River God!

The aquatic exercises of a public bath, with all their variety of character, must fall far short of the exhibition I am now describing.

With countenances, partly portraying the alarm of their situation, and partly contracted by risibility; now concealed under the water by the insecurity of their footing, a moveable sand, now diverging from it's surface towards the shore, which they could not make; their dresses, sometimes the sport of the capricious breeze, and again immersed in the opposite elements—the deplorable confusion of these unwilling naiads is beyond imagination. Hogarth's pencil might have compassed the subject; my pen cannot attempt it.

Cavannah, alone, maintained the dignity of his department, and by a happy

presence of mind, which was indeed the only ingredient wanting for the release of the soaking crew, caught the projecting branch of a weeping willow, which, bending to the stream, paid that homage we were not likely to imitate, and raised himself on the shore.

Nora was his first object; he succeeded by the intervention of a third party, sent doubtless by Oceana, in the shape of a peasant boy, with a long potato hook, in rescuing his only daughter; and the progressive landing of the party followed, through the same means.

Upon recovering our bewildered senses, we discovered our self-directed boat encountering the centre arch of the bridge, that connects the garrison of Athlone with the town, and leads into the county of Roscommon.

The rain still descended, and the motley group, with no one article of

apparel in it's original shape or position, and headed by the grave Cavanaugh, the parson of the parish, entered the main street, amid the astonishment of some, the laughter of others, and the inconceivable feelings of our own assembly.

The morning launch was fashionable in the extreme; the evening return, dinnerless and wet, not so much so.

A shipwrecked mariner left naked on the inflexible rock, and skreened by the bounteous magazine of charitable donation from the ruin that threatened his existence, had not a more reasonable cause of exultation in the deliverance of his emaciated person, than we were now affected by, on undergoing the several changes of raiment and ablution; which, at length, produced, as it were, a complete resuscitation of animal spirits; and caused, in its

happy transmutation, only a smile for the danger in which we had engaged.

The unpacking of the two hampers was, as a chastisement for former wanderings, entrusted to my superintendence, and the merriment occasioned by the extrication of a beautiful white cat, the envied pet of Nora Cavannah, from the osier bonds that had confined her delicate figure, so unaccustomed to restriction, contributed to the festivity of the evening; which was enhanced upon discovering, that the captive epicure had made a material inroad into the cold pigeon pie, and fractured two bottles of madeira, in her ineffectual struggle for liberty.

It appears that in the hurry of preparation I had placed a part of the provision in a hamper, which had been chosen by this paragon of the feline race for a morning's nap!

“Homer himself hath been observed to do!”

As I generally "looked one way and moved another," the stifled mew, which I remembered to have heard, proceeding as I thought from a nest of purblind kittens in a neighbouring dormitory, had no effect upon me, and the poor pet puss waited for the shadows of evening, before a gaol delivery could be managed, and her emancipation brought about!

I had about this period passed three years under the delightful shelter of Cavannah's roof, and my regard for him was cemented, not exclusively by the ardent desire I entertained of being numbered in his family-register, but generally by the many amiable qualities that shone around his universal deportment. He was not of that race of beings who are merely

"Fruges consumere nati;"

but a man, who, feeling the frailty of his existence, determined to pass it in

deeds of unreserved benevolence; and, acting up to the exalted resolution, during a life devoted to the exercises of charity, that could not be impeached, enjoyed the winter of his days, without reproach for the conduct of his earlier seasons; and combated the convulsions that agitated his native land, in the genuine spirit of christian forgiveness, beloved and beloved.

The affluent who needed his advice, and the indigent who craved his bounty, were alike regarded and respected; and the time never came, when the one was dismissed without attention, or the other without relief.

Above want himself, he distributed the superfluity of his income among the miserable objects that drew their support from the channel of his liberality; and all he would have prescribed for others was a conformity to the principles of forbearance it was his duty to inculcate, and his practice to

manifest. And had the axiom been attended to by those who were capable of appreciating the beneficial results of a doctrine so just and wise, though they neglected it's fulfilment, a far different order of things would have superseded that anarchy, which a dereliction of his tenets engendered and produced.

. He preserved the satisfaction of having opened the straight path of rectitude to their view, while he lamented that the accessories of rebellion had neither courage nor inclination to pursue it.

Cavannah united to these excellent qualifications, an immutable adherence to whatever he conceived to be a fair construction of matters that engaged his interest.

This tenacious opinion might by some be called obstinacy ; I shall only allow it to have been resolution. And as the motives that elicited this pecu-



liar trait of his character were, like those I have already mentioned, unquestionable, he may without exaggeration be designated as the "*Justum et tenacem propositi virum*," whom *Horace* recommends to our notice.

Impressed with a conviction of the danger to which I was exposing myself in risking his disregard, I perceived with the most lively concern, that the late failings I had been guilty of would be far from favourable to the insertion of my name in the *Cavannah* genealogy: and the surmise of my deterioration in the esteem of my worthy tutor was speedily succeeded by the most unequivocal expression of a "farewell to all my greatness!"

A few nights subsequent to our last adventure, *Nora* having retired to enjoy a repose, which I was about, as I then thought, to lose for ever! the venerable pastor, drawing a chair more closely to the expiring embers of a

peat fire, and laying aside a pipe, with which he had indulged himself, candidly told me, that he observed my attentions to his daughter with much distress. "Valuing," said he, "your Uncle's friendship, as that of a brother; and painful as is the task, my duty enjoins me to declare, that from what I have been able to collect of your turn of mind, during your residence in my family, it bears no bias whereupon I could ever think of fixing my Nora's happiness."

I gazed upon him in wild wretchedness! A half suppressed convulsive sigh had nearly been the last effort of paralysed nature!

He proceeded in the recapitulation of the several offences, that at length drew down his soul-rending sentence! Reverting to the exposure of his darling's life on Teague's potato car! the terrible desolation I made at Crazy Castle! and particularly the fall of

king William! the catastrophe on the river Shannon! and the consequent ridicule of his parishioners, which he had never before incurred! he then alluded to the advice contained in Mrs. O'Carol's letter; hinting that the caution was unnecessary on her part, as he had fully made up his mind (here a rapid flow of tears hid Cavannah from my sight) to advise me to give up all thoughts of sharing Nora's heart; and that if I could not otherwise accomplish this resolution, (the tears still fell) I must prepare myself, however sorry he might be to wound my feelings, from the high respect he bore my uncle, to leave Athlone, and Nora for ever!

Cavannah sought, at the conclusion of his dreadful judgment, the balmy sleep, of which he had completely deprived me.

I reclined, entranced as it were, but not refreshed, in the same position in

which he had left me, till the busy hum of morning drove me from my interregnum of reason!

My tutelar friend had certainly serious calls upon the exercise of the resolution he professed.

His daughter was a jewel, in his estimation invaluable. He discovered my affection for her, and feared that reciprocal sentiment might lead to a union injurious to the peace of his only child. Alas! how unsubstantial are our hopes! and how faint a breath is sufficient to extinguish these airy nothings, when the balance of paternal power has only to counterpoise it the ineffectual weight of youthful inclination!

An uncommunicative, half-retiring manner, succeeded to Cavanah's former frankness. I no longer beheld in him the open, ingenuous conduct, that heretofore encouraged the progress of my ambition; and the melancholy of a

“Stygian cave forlorn” concealed the bright arch I had raised on a Heaven of felicity in all the vivid hues of a celestial rainbow !

At the blush of day, on halcyon wing, man cuts the ambient air ! the imagery of his mind, pure and unclouded as the blue expanse, through which he flies to hope’s fair throne ! unceasing echoes blazon forth his joy, and endless visions appear to crown him with success !

The night comes on ! despair attends ! dark threatening horrors crowd upon the scene ! The illusion fails ! and hope, unable to support the shock, fades in the gathering storm, and disappointment reigns !

Several long days of more than apprehension, variegated by no material change for the better, thus glided into eternity ; when the postman, to him indifferent whether grief or joy, brought the following epistle, which,

giving another pretext for removing me from his habitation, my tutor was rejoiced to embrace it.

How fortunate for Cavannah! how fatal, alas! to an "Absent Man!" The letter ran thus :

Singlestick Hall, Wilts.

"MY DEAR SIR,

As young men are seldom inclined to attend to their best interests, when the recommendation comes directly from those, whose influence is apt to be misnamed authority, where affection alone is intended; I shall through you make known my wishes, that my nephew may immediately repair to Dublin, for the purpose of being introduced to the family of the Neverspars, my dear, and inestimable friends. I design their daughter Fatima for my Nephew's wife: his consolation in all the ills of mortality, and his escape from the many

evils that now infest me, an old bachelor!

You will give him to understand, that as he values my present or future favour, so will he receive or reject my commands.

The expenses of his suitable appearance I shall be happy in remitting, and happier far in his ready acquiescence in a match, where wealth and happiness will be inseparably united!

My friend Nevèrspar approves of my plan, and promises his support.

Yours, till death,

FRANK SINGLESTICK.

This was my death-warrant! Cavanaugh, eager for my dismissal, but disinclined to urge it, from the regard he entertained for my uncle Singlestick, now gladly communicated the terms upon which I was invited to surrender.

Far, far different were my feelings.

To lose the society of Nora in any case; but more especially under the idea of offering my hand to another! Monstrous thought! it thrilled me with despair! and I felt that a separation, if not fatal to her, would with me be an insurmountable barrier to happiness.

Impressed with the gloominess of my prospects, I spent a miserable day.

Nora kept her apartment.

Cavannah was engaged in charitable occupations; and early in the evening I sought the privacy of my own room; and by that suspension of thought which accompanies the pillow of wretchedness, caught a visionary glance at happier days!

I dreamt, that, as I lay musing on the book of my destiny, a damsel clad in a robe of celestial blue, and crowned with an amaranthine chaplet, her air graceful and affecting, gently beck-



oned me to follow her footsteps. The partition of my solitary chamber fell at her approach to it: a magnificent saloon opened on my astonished view, and the air breathed the most delicate perfumes! Melodious music sounded through the vaulted roof, while echo filled up the intervals with the name of Nora! A fleecy cloud descended from the fretted dome, and at each expansive evolution disclosed a rosy Cupid hovering around the car of Hymen; while a banquet of the choicest fruit rose from the golden floor!

My ecstasy was heightened upon discovering on a pedestal of alabaster the lovely form of Cavannah's daughter, encircled in a veil of gossamer! Hymen, taking a goblet filled with nectar in one hand, and me in the other, glided through the rich arcade to the foot of the statue; when, as he raised the sparkling offering to her lips, a sudden tumult filled the lofty hall! A withered

hand embraced the cup; and the costly pageant of felicity vanished before the din of contending dæmons! I endeavoured to evade the blow, and looking towards the space, through which the vision disappeared, I saw this scroll just faintly glimmering on the silvered edge of the departing cloud—"Nora shall still be thine! Obey and conquer!"

The barking of a large house dog at this instant awoke me, and I uttered aloud, "Nora shall still be mine!"

Now, gentle Reader! allow me to take it for granted, that you sometimes dream of the subject that has most occupied your thoughts during the day. I will not suppose, that the ephemera occupies your attention beyond the moment of waking; though I remember to have heard of a lady, who, dreaming that a certain number would doubtless gain the first prize

in an approaching lottery, had no farther rest, until the cabalistical figures were purchased for her.

Whether or no the vision was realized by the lucky revolution of the wheel of fortune, my memory will not allow me to inform you : it will be sufficient for my purpose to confess, that the emblematical happiness of my fancy possessed me entirely ; though I must still hope, that you will allow me, in assenting to a departure from Norah Cavannah, to have been actuated rather by a strong sense of duty, than persuaded by the idle operations of a dream. I saw that I was defeated, and thought it more advisable, by an honourable retreat, to abandon for the present the advantage I had already gained, than, by keeping my ground, to hazard the utter discomfiture of my hopes !

I felt that I laboured under the temporary displeasure of Cavannah ;

and I was convinced, that my absence from Nora could in no degree abate the ardour of her attachment, while it might heal the breach my continued indiscretion would only tend to widen.

It was impossible for me to overcome my absence of thought; and, in resolving to part from Nora, I indulged no reason for despairing to see her again.

I saw the necessity of acting upon this better determination immediately, as circumstances might induce me to waver; and I prepared to quit Cavanah's roof with all possible expedition.

I am convinced, that my Reader would be too much affected by a narrative of my parting scene with his distracted daughter!

In pity, therefore, to those, who have experienced a convulsion of frame, occasioned by that one sad word "farewell;" and in the assur-

ance, that they who have not, could do my memoir no degree of justice; I shall briefly inform my inquiring friends, that I started on the morning subsequent to the arrival of my Uncle Singlestick's letter, with a heavy heart, for the Irish capital, plighting my vows of everlasting love to Nora Cavannah, and tendering my grateful acknowledgment of her father's protection and friendship.

An Absent Man could hardly, in these untoward circumstances, expect to escape errors; and I found myself on my journey to Dublin, with a volume of *Paradise Lost* in one pocket, and in the other a snuff-box, ornamented with a medallion of the parting of Hector and Andromache; both the property of my worthy host!

“ The morning lower'd,  
And heavily in clouds brought on the day.”

This despondency of nature was ag-

gravated by a calamity, that befell the Galway Mail, my chosen vehicular conveyance to Dublin.

On turning the sharp corner of a narrow street, the coachman, who, by a copious matin libation was rendered incapable of the charge confided to his care, neglected to take a sweep sufficient to clear the point, and the carriage was precipitated upon the sharp cones of the flinty pavement beneath.

The consternation of the passengers and inhabitants rose to it's height upon hearing the report of a blunderbuss, which was discharged, though fortunately without mischief, by the percussion of the barrel.

Those on the outside of the coach were hurled headlong into the deep abyss of a contiguous wine cellar, the folding doors of which were wide open; and the six unfortunate travellers, who were wedged within, one upon another, were, by units, forcibly pulled

through the window, the lateral position of which permitted their liberation.

The panic-struck party, both in the vault and in the vehicle, were inconvenienced only by some severe bruises, and miraculously escaped instant destruction.

The horses became again manageable, and their driver, being sobered by his downfall, persisted in resuming the command of his cattle.

Although this obstinacy was overruled by the rhetoric of a Galway fisherman, who spoke vehemently and feelingly upon the rights of the people, none of the maimed and disturbed inside passengers could be prevailed upon to resume the seats they had willingly enough quitted.

The coach, however, being in all other respects in complete order for a second start, I rather approved of their determination, than condemned it; and throwing myself with the most

consummate intrepidity into the vacant receptacle, desired, that the associate whip would ensure the circumrotation of the pivot, before he attempted the turning of any angular obstructions he might have occasion to avoid in the course of the journey.

I drew up the glasses, and, tossed on a fluctuating stream of anguish and irresolution, entombed myself from a view of the town, which would have implanted a dagger in my breast. In truth, I could have snatched the desirable steel with the utmost satisfaction, and was just inquiring of myself, whether it were a crime,

“ To bear too tender, or too firm a heart,  
To act a lover's, or a Roman's part ?”

when it occurred to my now a little more arranged ideas, that, as I possessed no convenient weapon of self-destruction, it might be as well to de-



fer any farther operations "of a dimly gleaming visionary sword," and content myself with a revival of

"Scenes, where love and bliss immortal reign."

The transversed imagery presented a "dark Cimmerian desert" to my fancy, where "brooding darkness spreading his jealous wings," usurped the smiling sway of music's fascination; and the poor traveller wandered after the retreating sound in a wilderness of "horrid shapes and shrieks, and sights unholy;" her voice died upon the gale, and blackest midnight reigned!

As surely as Ireland is emancipated from the engenderment of sibilant and poisonous reptiles, so surely was my bosom corroded by the poignant sting of recollection. Where was Nora? where her enchanting image? where her tear-suffused countenance? buried

doubtless, if yet animate, after a downy engagement with her resisting pillow, on a bed of disappointed hope!

The beautiful melody descriptive of the former pride of Tara, over which my Nora had so often shed the soul of music, resounded in my ears; and I called to mind the wail of the unhappy limner.

A neat paper parcel lying on the seat before me, I took it into my hand; and, labouring under the horrid apprehension, that Cavannah's dark-eyed daughter was suffering a perpetual trance, I scribbled on it with an obtuse pencil (having, as I before observed, no steel utensil for my use) as follows :

“ O clos'd are those eyes, that were beaming  
with beauty,

And rivall'd the diamond in lustre so bright :  
They clos'd when your father enforc'd the hard  
duty,

To part from your lover, and sank into night.

O fair maid of Athlone! a long day of sorrow,  
 A long day of wo 'tis thy portion to feel;  
 The voice, once accustom'd to bid thee good  
                   morrow, .  
 Is destin'd no longer it's love to reveal.

O sleep in sweet slumbers, oblivion is sweetest;  
 You rise but to anguish, from quiet to range:  
 Entranc'd, with some vision of joy if thou meetest,  
 Awake, and the bright dream will instantly  
                   change.

Few, few, are the hopes I can offer of gladness,  
 O sleep maid of Athlone, 'till fortune befriend;  
 But should separation accelerate madness,  
                   Shed tears of affection, and pity my end."

Being now beset, as the coach stopped  
 to change horses, by a gang of im-  
 portunate mendicants, who begged  
 some silver "of his honour, for the  
*love of God!*" their cant expression,  
 I threw the parcel on the cushion,  
 and, as I afterward discovered, the  
 pencil accompanied a handful of five-  
 penny-pieces into the street.

Dissatisfied, however, with this manifestation of my liberality, the suppliant crowd implored an extension of it; a petition, with which it being inconvenient to comply on my part, was of course again reiterated on theirs: so that in my own defence, being incapable of any material exertion of lungs, from the depression of my spirits; and which, with an audience of Irish beggars, would in any case have been a hazardous experiment; I retreated from the combat, by retiring into a back room in the Inn, where from the whirlpool of the mob I got into the eddy of a hasty snack prepared for the outside passengers.

This unpleasing change, being neither the feast of reason, nor the flow of soul, drew me into a torturing review of our vegetable repast in the Islander's hut. Happy hut! to entertain my Nora!

I hung over a drowsy, glimmer-

ing, evanescent flame, improvident of food, and, as it turned out, disregarding of my personal security, as of my bodily refreshment; and the "Absent Man" had well nigh fallen a sacrifice to the quick-kindling firebrand, which an attentive Abigail had, unseen by him, thrust into the interstices of the grate.

Fortunately, however, the flaps of my coat were the only sufferers from the phlogistic torch; a loss I could well combat after the deprivations of the morning.

Our vehicle was now announced to be in readiness, and I resumed my solitary cage, amidst the hootings of the indiscriminate, indigent assemblage; and pining as before, like the mate-bereaved turtle, passed the remainder of my journey in the agonies of separation!

A counterpoise of conflicting visions brought me at length to the border of

the Phœnix Park; and I entered the Irish capital to fan a new flame, when I could gladly have expired on the fuming altar of my primitive love!

Having effected a deliverance from the chaotic tumult of the coach office of the Hibernian Hotel, I stole into the waste of an unfurnished apartment, chosen from it's affinity to my desolate reflections; not, however, without material apprehensions of the loss of a valuable portmanteau: it was not forthcoming; the clerk became impetuous; the coachman swore that he had untenanted the coach, and also the basket; and the master promised, should he be detected in it's embezzlement, to send it to any direction I might please to leave; when, not finding the key in my pocket, I assuaged my grief by convincing myself, that I had of course, as an "Absent Man," left the depository at Cavannah's house.

Hector and Andromache were the

only friends I saw ; till sable night again spread her ebon curtain, and wrapt me in it's involutions, courting her concealment.

My nocturnal repose was hasty and circumscribed ; a feverish quickened pulse taking the balm, left but the hurried interval of rest.

Nora danced before me in every metamorphosis of a distorted imagination ; and Aurora, the rosy-fingered favourite of old Homer, rose from her ultra-marine ottoman without a comfort for her bending slave, whose genuflections plainly demonstrated his anxiety for her approach.

The hotels of Dublin combining the most unqualified extravagance and dirt, I resolved upon taking lodgings, that I might, when I chose it, enjoy the solitude congenial to my feelings, though in the centre of a populous city.

I had now a task in hand of the utmost difficulty in all it's bearings, and

therefore a proper field for an "Absent Man."

I had by my obedience, to please my uncle Singlestick: by my manner, to ingratiate myself with the Neverspar family; by my conduct, to preserve my consequence; by my indifference, to avoid Fatima; and by my attention, to retain the heart of her, who certainly possessed mine.

I knew that my failure in several of these particulars was more than probable; but, in order to insure their completion, I endeavoured, by all the means in my power, to escape those absent moments, to which I principally attributed the perplexities I had to encounter. How far I succeeded the following pages will demonstrate; it is at least certain, that I felt anxious for improvement, although I could not command it.

Several days passed in the retirement I had realized, without an adven-



ture; the general apathy I laboured under preventing the accomplishment, and impeding the failure of any of my propositions: when, casting my eye over a newspaper my sympathizing landlady had thrown upon the table, I accidentally observed in the Holyhead Packet list the arrival of “Job Nevverspar, esq., his lady, and amiable daughter;” and, though feeling considerably apprehensive, that I should gain but little advantage in the acquisition, I was sufficiently tired of my own society to court theirs.

A more forward man would have swelled the number of his friendships, in the same quota of time I passed so unprofitably, to a centenary at least; but I had not even a desire to meet with that plastic set of beings, who, though known only by name, embrace you with all the ardour of a genuine regard.

As soon, therefore, as I imagined,

that they had recovered the indisposition occasioned by their voyage, taking it for granted, that they felt the usual inconveniencies of the briny billow, a scene I had no longing to rewitness, I resolved upon introducing myself to these dear and inestimable friends of my dear Uncle Singlestick.

I was received at a handsome house in Mountjoy Square, by my projected father-in-law, with much apparent prepossession in my favour.

This bias I attributed more to the sketch my Uncle might have given of me, than to any subduing outline in my own portrait; in truth, I was at this date “neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring;” and after the usual constrained civilities of a first meeting were nearly on the wane, and every affectionate inquiry and interrogatory I could make after my Uncle’s health, the identity of the large tench-pond,

and the stamina of his favourite old coach horse, were perfectly exhausted, the recession of the door gave to my most inquisitive sight the advancing forms of Mrs. Neverspar and her daughter Fatima.

But before I enter upon a description of their personal charms, I must detain my obliging Reader with a summary view of the master of the house.

Job Neverspar, esq., of Placid Hall, in the county of Wilts, a man about fifty years of age, possessed that peaceableness of countenance, which bespoke an inclination of mind superior to the bickerings of petty strife, and equal at least to the illimitable misfortunes that blight the horizon of mortality; there was a rosy circularity of face, upon which nothing but the expression of sudden mirth could in any degree encroach, and a propor-

tionate tendency to roundness, in the whole external form of my new friend, that manifested the dominion of unruffled peace within. His figure was short and compact, though I must allow, that it's symmetry was somewhat impaired by a forward protuberance, that served in ample folds as a resting place for the lavished snuff, (for he too was a snuff taker) which must otherwise have associated itself with the carpet below. His dress, and address, were equally easy, and unconfined. I had seen a higher polish in either particular on other persons; but his peculiar appearance required exactly the uniformity he had attained, to give a due effect to the sentiments he expressed.

These were of the same 'stamp as those of my late tutor, inasmuch as Neverspar's philanthropy appeared to be quite in unison with Cavannah's: but the one had an openheartedness in

his manner, which the more studious turn, and secluded habit of the other, had obscured, though not eradicated.

In short, Cavannah was a serious, Neverspar a cheerful companion; both excellent in the main point, but dissimilar in it's display.

The person of Job's spare rib afforded a contrast to the plumpness of his arm, as diametrical as any that can be imagined.

Mrs. Neverspar exceeded the usual elevation of the tender sex in a stature, metaphorically speaking, transparent.

The Sicilians, I am told, have a method of ascertaining a person's age by forcibly drawing up the outer skin on the back of the hand, by aid of the finger and thumb. If the subject be youthful, the cuticle returns to it's original position upon withdrawing the grasp; if otherwise, it preserves a compressed fold, indicative of the autumn of life.

As, however, I am no friend to the exposition of the fall of the mortal leaf, and could not indeed, in any case, have taken the liberty of using this receipt upon the manual delicacy of a lady at present unknown to me, I shall decline any impertinent observations upon age, and proceed to state, that the zone of her waist was of such circumscribed dimensions, that it might have embraced the robust arm of her conjugal idol without pressing the sinews; and the digression of collar-bone, observable from the tenuity of it's cutaneous tegument, appeared in direct opposition to the fulness of Mr. Neverspar's neck. Her fairy-footed shadowy figure left the blade uninjured by it's impression, and the daisies of the mead bloomed in their original regularity beneath her feet. Her visage was extremely well-modelled, but the retrogression of a slight veil of skin had destroyed it's

proportionate parts; and the acumen of her nasal honours projected as the keen point of a rocky fissure.

Would that I had the etching art of my Knight Templar in the happy island! But, alas! a pen-etching is the only view of the family I can furnish!

To all this apparent acuteness of form, Mrs. Neverspar united the utmost good-nature; and the proverb of "a sharp elbow, and a scolding wife," was in her confronted and confuted.

Like her happy spouse she suffered no casual contingent to imbitter her quiet disposition; and notwithstanding the dissimilitude of their outward forms, the pen of the most inventive fiction could not have drawn a more agreeing, or agreeable pair, than Mr. and Mrs. Neverspar.

Raised above the necessities of the time by a wise administration of the fortune with which they were blessed, and avoiding every luxury that might

injure it, their idea was comfort, and it's acquisition the extent of their wishes.

This antediluvian couple saw in their daughter Fatima the accomplishments my Uncle Singlestick fancied I should discover; and deriving from her happiness a great portion of their own, resolved upon trusting "their bark to the capricious wind," for the purpose of showing her the capital of a country, from which the family had drawn their original wealth.

Fatima Neverspar was a comical little brunette, to use a vulgar phrase, "as broad as she was long." She resembled her father in jollity of appearance, and her mother in the sound of her voice. She had the eyes of the one, the hair of the other, and the united amiabilities of both. But, alas! how unpleasing to me were the roundness of her shoulders, the dimples of her



fat smiling cheeks, and the unceremonious air of her locomotion!

I looked in vain for the charms I have heretofore described; and the fascination of Nora maintained an undivided superiority over the enveloped shape of her intended antagonist.

I hope the Reader will mete out to me a small portion of praise for the minute observations of an "Absent Man," goaded by a lamentable distress of mind, and labouring under the disadvantages inseparable from a first introduction.

I retired from my interview with the Neverspars not materially wavering from the opinion I had entertained of my new acquaintance; certainly not struck at first sight, only inasmuch as they gained upon my unqualified admiration, by that most insinuating of all endearments, good-nature! And

promising to attend them to a grand review in the Phoenix Park on the following morning, (in furtherance of their primary object, the amusement of the comical little brunette) I sought the retirement of my lodgings, which was fortunately varied by the arrival of my recovered portmanteau! It came from the once happy scene of my illusion!

“ Where perhaps some beauty lies,  
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.”

The fastening to this travelling wardrobe, which was carefully concealed beneath a direction in Nora's hand-writing (happy pen thus to be employed!) was also the key to polite literature.

It's original security having, as I concluded, been mislaid, or in an absent moment destroyed, Nora had substituted in lieu of it a padlock of cu-

rious workmanship, which had been sent her from Dublin with directions for its use previous to my quitting Athlone.

It was composed of four small brass cylinders, engraved with the alphabetical characters as far as the letter U, and revolving on a steel axis turned up at either end, forming a handle to keep them together. These rollers were to be set to a particular word; and the letters being fixed in little litches rising on the surface of the axis, the mystery consisted in the inability of an indifferent person to separate them, until a discovery of the important term was effected.

I tried, Nora! hope! fear! rage! care! mate! open! all exemplifying my feelings at the critical moment! What could break the charm but Love! This was the secret! and off flew the padlock in an instant! I discovered on opening the cover the followin

copy of verses, and if they failed in their full effect, from the circumstance of my having read them, with a small variation of name, in the *Athlone Herald* of the preceding week, I was willing for my own peace of mind to consider them as the genuine effusion of Nora Cavannah, and falling on my couch read them with the most determined attention.

My plentiful tears obliterated the manuscript, but to the best of my recollection their substance was as follows :

Seest thou, my love, yon falling star,  
 It's radiant brightness closing,  
 Plunge in the elemental war  
 Of tempest dire opposing ?

So I my brilliant moments past,  
 Fell as a star descending;  
 Torn hapless by the infuriate blast  
 Of hostile tongues contending.

Seest thou, my love, yon languid orb  
 In gath'ring clouds expiring,  
 Their dewy moisture to absorb,  
 Retirement most desiring ?

So I my wan extinguish'd hope  
 As tears saline dissolving,  
 Gave to the flood it's ample scope,  
 In solitude revolving.

The orient day will never shine,  
 Continued darkness veiling,  
 So long as this poor heart of mine  
 Your absence is bewailing.

Then cheer my solitary gloom;  
 Return to quit me never ;  
 The spring of life in roseate bloom  
 Shall gild thy moments ever !

This very gratifying renewal of an unextinguishable flame imposed upon me the liveliest emotions of self-abandonment, which even it's close approximation to the poetry of Saint Valentine's day could in no degree violate.

The muse was not gained by gifts,  
and the spontaneous verse absolutely  
maddened me with delight! I saw not  
Dublin! I saw not Dublin!

My rivetted eyes were for a moment fixed upon the lounging chair in Cavannah's library, and I fancied his only daughter! my only hope! tracing the emblematical imagery of a Roman nuptial rite with the graver of faithfulness. The jocund sound vibrated through the room, and the allegorical process filled my ears with a merry peal.

I slept soundly, till being disturbed by the entrance of my landlady with an eel-pie I had, in commemoration of the river Shannon, (fair stream that erst was wont to reflect my Nora's blushes!) ordered for my solitary dinner. I hastily desired her to present the ringers with a guinea note each, and as much whiskey as they could swallow.

At this time I fancied nothing so much as eels ! Meat was too cloying for my dainty appetite ! and the dear serpentine fish gratified my hunger, while it appeased my recollection. I ate and thought, and thought and ate again !

After " one cup of wine " to Nora, I was occupied in a perusal of *Paradise Lost*;

" Now came still Ev'ning on, and Twilight gray  
Had in her sober liv'ry all things clad."

when " mine hostess " interrupted me again with the entrance of the tea equipage.

I, little accustomed to the infusion of the China plant, turned the smoaking agitated tide into the capacious reservoir below ; but was totally unaware of not having taken the necessary precaution of stopping it again, until assailed by the boiling stream which ran down a crack in the table, and, trick-

ling through a thin pair of pantaloons, reminded me of my neglect.

Whether I was a little disconcerted by this repetition of my absence, or indignant at the unsuppressed smile of my landlady which accompanied it, is a matter of no consequence ; I certainly became tired of my book, and conceived an unfavourable impression of Milton's taste in calling Eve

“ Herself, though fairest, unsupported flow’r.”

Nora, you must know, was not fair, and as I drew all my pictures of feminine beauty from this enchanting model, I could no longer endure the description of our general mother, and threw the volume to the ground.

A confused irregular doze carried me through the night, and I arose in the fear of committing a mistake in the company of the Neverspars, which, though I felt considerable indifference, it was my interest to avoid.



I carefully locked up Hector and Andromache with my repudiated volume, until I had an opportunity of returning them to Cavannah, and repaired by mid-day to Mountjoy Square.

The comely group, led on by the comical little brunette, were in readiness to attend me to the Park ; and a carriage superior in it's embellishments to the one I travelled in to Athlone, though sufficiently antique to excite the attention of the Hibernian eye, which is particularly caught by a showy equipage, and particularly observant of a rusty one, conveyed us in safety to the scene of action.

There is something prodigiously imposing in

The collected columns of corps ;  
 The happy harmony of hautboys ;  
 The solemn, slow salute ;  
 The brilliant, blazing bayonets ;  
 The moving, mathematical manœuvres ;  
 The adroit, alternate advance ;

The frequent, formal fire;  
 The regular, rapid retreat;  
 The quick, questionable quadrangle;  
 The opportune, overvalued order;  
 The excellent, ending evolutions of  
 a regimental, reverberating review!

The splendour of a meridian sun  
 contributed to the complete exhibition  
 of these united qualifications; and the  
 richness of the surrounding scenery  
 gave a finish to the pageantry, upon  
 which nothing but the arrival of his  
 Excellency the Lord Lieutenant could  
 improve.

His presence was greeted by the ho-  
 nours due to his high rank : but I am  
 induced to believe, that had custo-  
 mary forms admitted of a stronger  
 expression of enthusiasm than the  
 sound of drums and muskets could ex-  
 cite, the inclination of the surround-  
 ing multitude would, in honest accla-  
 mation, have supplied the deficiency.

I happened during my sojourn in

Dublin to have obtained the knowledge of several cases, wherein the interference and the assistance of the vice-regal charity afforded the happiest relief; and the conviction that a great officer of state, acting under circumstances of no common public danger, with a dispassionate and highly beneficial deliberation, was at the same time, previous to the appeal of distress, in a country where it's cries were so multiform and so acute, will, I am certain. authorize the above remark.

The troops having been obliqued for the formation of a new line on a given company by the echellon march, I became so much interested in the change of position, that I jumped from the barouche-seat just at the nick of time when the word "halt" would, if correctly obeyed, have brought the men into that delightful even mass so indispensibly necessary to the regularity of the movement.

I fancied myself generalissimo, and gave with all my lungs the word “forward.” It was certainly forward in me to interfere, but pigmies will be ambitious.

I had never before had a command, and a nervous irritability might have caused a similar mistake in any other than an “Absent Man,” upon a debüt in power!

I, however, still hoped, that I might have escaped the observation of the by-standers, as I indubitably made no impression on the battalion; and to use the phraseology of some centuries durance, one may sometimes “pass in a crowd” unnoticed.

I had no wish to eternalize my military prowess; but only to conceal from the heterogeneous mass of the soldiery, nobility, and mobility, that I was an “Absent Man.”

The warriors having marched to their barracks, a system of mutual

quiz was adopted by the company, who kept their ground for the enjoyment of this fashionable pastime.

I would gladly have beat up my landlady's quarters, being fearful of getting into some other unlucky scrape; and, moreover, I was desirous of writing—need I say to whom? But I found that a separation from the Neverspars, who were excessively delighted at seeing and being seen, would be uncivil and impracticable. I therefore made a virtue of necessity, and assumed a staring though I wished it not.

The comical little brunette leant over the button-holes of her papa's waistcoat to view the busy throng; and Mrs. Neverspar amused herself with a bunch of hot-house grapes purchased for the occasion.

In this opposition of optics, I flattered myself that I espied from a carriage window the indistinct physiognomy of the O'Carol family.

I tremblingly, yet willingly, quitted the post to which I had returned from my late adventure, eager to offer my salutations to a party I so highly esteemed, and whose former kind treatment of ill-starred occurrences had rendered them doubly interesting to me. My conjecture was right! The bull "passant-gardant" stared me in the face, and confirmed my suspicion.

I saw the rosy Miss O'Carol quizzing a hussar officer, who, having taken some considerable pains to set off himself and quadruped to the best possible advantage, had failed in the attempt by tearing his fur pelisse, and losing half his mustaches in the exertion of curbing his snorting steed. A misery of human life! and a considerable one!

Thinking that Miss O'Carol gazed upon my advancing person through the medium of her circular, appendant, artificial, transparent substance, I

thrust my hand into the carriage, (it would have been better received in the bull's mouth!) for the purpose of a friendly digital shake: but, alas! how cutting was the rebuke of the window glass, which was drawn up as tight as possible to keep out the dust.

This dilemma drew me underneath the vehicle to avoid explanation, and I escaped on the sinister side of it by the use of my hands and knees; the lacerated fingers were, however, not much benefited by this stratagem, as I discovered on my return to College Green, that I had robbed government of a considerable quantity of the pulverized soil of the Park, which tenaciously adhered to the coagulated blood!

Alas! what would Nora have opined, had she now seen my mangled joints and knuckles incarnadined in the dust-besprinkled, sanguinary die?

Alas! how ignominious for a lover of romance to have his armorial bearings incorporated with the earth! and yet a bloody hand was certainly a distinction on his escutcheon.

Alas! that the gentle physician was upwards of fifty miles from me; and that her true knight of the bleeding heart and bleeding hand could profit nothing by the experience of her practice!

My wounds, however, having been dressed and tranquillised by the care and applications of my domesticated landlady, who was celebrated for her magical nostrums throughout College Green, I resolved upon making another essay of my dangerous abilities in a pedestrian tour of the city.

I had proceeded with the most fortunate propriety as far as Carlisle Bridge, when I overtook the Never-spars; who, alighting from their car-



riage in Sackville Street, were about to explore the column raised to the honour of Nelson, the victor of the Nile, the conqueror of Trafalgar, by a people who more warmly appreciated the enterprise of an illustrious hero, than this inefficient tribute of their admiration could possibly express. It recorded only his mortal exploits: their immortal fame lived in the hearts of Irishmen!

As a refinement in politeness is the characteristic of this nation, I was sensible that I should be stigmatized as a creature of a brute creation, and the very reverse of every thing "elegant," had I not offered my arm to the comical little brunette.

O! what a change was here! It was only by superior skill on the one part, and superior perseverance on the other, that we contrived, dissimilar in height as in mind, to interweave our brachial

beauties; and then my arm touching the succinct girdle of her drapery, I ejaculated,

“ Give me but what this ribbon bound,  
Take all the rest the sun goes round.”

I had not the least idea of what I said, and I was sure I had no meaning in it; but Job looked applause; his spouse assent; and the comical little brunette confusion. My right foot advancing just as her left pressed the pavement, we jostled on here again at variance to the foot of the pillar, lighted by the smiling countenances of Neverspar and his wife; and much to the amusement of a group of military loungers, who, to their discernment be it spoken, very fairly made game of us.

Some brief explanation of my sudden disappearance at the review,

though I took care to conceal the forfeit of my indiscretion under a neat Limerick glove, took place on our way ; and as the cluster of critics were either admiring the solidity, or censuring the heaviness of the column, I observed to the comical little brunette with the most promising quickness, the wit of some Hibernian mechanic, who alluding in his different reading to the removal of the scaffolding that had encompassed it, had erased the C and the H from that side of the sarcophagus which bore the inscription of "Copenhagen;" and thereby converted the memorial of that victory into the ludicrous implication of "Open agen." This invigorating perception somewhat restored my depressed spirits, and I accepted an invitation to pass the remainder of the day with the family who witnessed it.

I was delighted with the good-na-

ture of these exemplary people, though, for reasons as well known to the Reader as myself, I could carry my complaisance no further.

Our comfortable meal, of which, luckily for me, a cluster of delicious eels formed the top dish, passed off with no other interruption than the trivial one, which was occasioned by my addressing Mrs. Neverspar with, "My dear, your good health." As this excellent woman was above the suspicion of an intentional insult, and unconscious of my wanderings towards Nora Cavannah, who hovered round my cup, no notice was taken of my error; and the conversation being kept up in a tolerably smart succession, with the glories of the grand review, I was rejoiced to hear Job declare, that he had never seen military precision carried to a greater height! Here I thought I must have fallen; but he continued to express his entire satisfaction of the day,

and closed his panegyric with observing, that not the minutest atom of an accident had clouded the splendour of the scene. Here again I escaped detection; and I anticipated a quiet conclusion to a day chequered with remorse and gratulation!

I had reason to infer that my friend Job, at this second visit of mine, expected some slight indication of my growing partiality for his adored Fatima. Ah! blind infatuation! I observed that he studiously watched my movements, though I am free to believe, that in no one look or gesture could he extract the least honey of hope.

My person alone was in Dublin, my faculty, if I had any, floated on the waters of the implacable Shannon. O, Nora! O, romance! O, Absent Man!

Neverspar had probably heard from my uncle Singlestick, that I might be worth looking after, and it was evi-

dent from his manner, that he would not have been averse to my advances.

As, however, I had no idea of the kind, his encomiums on Fatima's varied excellencies, his remote suggestions, and his forced jokes on the felicities of matrimony, were "caviare to the vulgar," unheeded, not understood.

With Nora, indeed,

"Where friendship full exerts her softest power,  
Perfect esteem, enliven'd by desire  
Ineffable, and sympathy of soul;  
Thought meeting thought, and will preventing will,  
With boundless confidence, for nought but love  
Can answer love, and render bliss secure,"

the case would have been different.

Fatima on her part, good natured soul! lost nothing by useless perturbation and corroding care; her unconcerned manner plainly demonstrated her indifference to me, and I was

equally regardless of her. There was neither romance in her composition, nor wildness in her eye; she partook so largely of the ease of her parent's disposition, that if assailed by the whole archery of the "blind bow boy's but-shaft," she would I believe have adhered to the aphorisms of Crazy Jane, and

" When men flatter, sigh, and languish,  
Think them false,

though she had not as yet "found them so!" Shakspeare tells us, that

" He jests at scars that never felt a wound."

and the comical little brunette possessed in it's strictest sense this negligence of love.

Mr. and Mrs. Neverspar, the sun-raisins of matrimony, as the season was on the decline, were now projecting a temporary departure from the shores

of the Liffey “in search of the picturesque;” and conceiving that I might from my local knowledge be enabled to act the part of an index in the entertainment they were getting up, several queries were put to me, in the course of the evening’s conversation, as to the most feasible line of operations.

The lady consort opened the scene by requesting a sketch of the most prominent beauties of the Lakes of Killarney. I replied, as well as I can remember, to the following effect :

“ In towering majesty of form, this polished work of nature skirts the meandering involutions of the translucent Shannon; and, reflected on the dark blue surface of it’s waters, reflects again upon the parting sigh of our last interview ! Her name rests on the clefted rock, and is echoed through the vaulted apertures of the abyss beneath ! ”

This doubtful explanation induced



Job to inquire of me, in what county the Lakes of Killarney were situate? I answered, "Athlone." "Pray, sir," said the comical little brunette, "where is the Giant's Causeway?" "Between Athlone and Crazy Castle, madam." "And Bantry Bay, Sir, where the French landed?" "In Hare Island, madam." "Pray, sir, which is considered the best shop in Limerick for ladies' gloves?" "Cavannah's, madam, at Athlone." "Where is the Dargle, sir!" asked Mrs. Neverspar. "At the front of the pensioners' cottage, madam." "What town is most famous for poplins, sir?" "The garden of Cavannah's house, at Athlone, madam." Neverspar begging me to give him some account, a little more coherently, of the celebrated fair at Ballinasloe, I immediately assured him, that she was incomparably inferior to the fair of Athlone! In short, the unanswered trio, where they expected to find quite a denizen in geo-

graphical information, discovered an "Absent Man."

The penetration of Mrs. Neverspar beginning "to smell a rat," she cunningly asked me, "if I were to stand godfather at an Irish christening, what name I should prefer, supposing the infant to be of the tender sex?" I filled the room with "Nora! Nora!" and confirmed their awakened suspicions of "a snake in the grass."

The servant, presently afterwards, brought in a parcel of books from the Library, protected by a neat sheet of paper. I saw Mrs. Neverspar very carefully examining the characters written on the inner-side, in a bad, scarcely legible, hand; and observed a most marked smile on her countenance in tracing the besmeared memoranda. No, not the veriest romance ever indited could have planned a more distressing untoward coincidence! It was positively my own poe-

try, which from the time I threw it on the seat of the coach, to the present moment, had never been remembered.

The delighted lady read the effusion aloud; and I had only to bless my stars, that no names were introduced in it, that might lead to the exposure of its author.

The occurrence of the word "Athlone," which had so lately been uppermost on my lips, and their knowledge of my residence in that town, were however, with my sheepish looks, a strong testimonial of my guilt, though no proof positive could fortunately be adduced.

My topography having failed, and an awkward silence succeeding this nearly fatal perusal, the comical little brunette, with the most happy and seasonable alacrity, flew to the piano-forte:

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast,  
To soften rocks, and bend the knotted oak."

it is also a vast reformer of a cadence in conversation.

My friend Job, who from his palpable habit, as his *cara sposa* informed me, frequently offered a snoring sacrifice to old Morpheus towards the close of the evening, fell into a somniferous stupefaction of intellectual ability. The active and pliable mind of his dissimilar counterpart, exerted itself in the fabrication of a silken web to hold the miser's idol, and the sage's dross: whilst I, the "Absent Man," gave the most amiable consideration to the sphere of harmony, ruled by that laughable planet, the comical little brunette.

Fatima now warbled forth, "Tell her I love her." This was exactly what I wished to repeat to Nora: it reminded me of my proposed epistle; and without waking papa, or disturbing mamma, I begged of the plump little syren to excuse my re-

tiring, on account of a sudden serious head-ach. She, being accustomed to think with Pope, that "whatever is, is right," made no objection to my hasty exit, and I left the room.

"Tell her I love her" rested on my tongue as I descended the staircase; and the servant asking me, as he gave me my hat, "if I had any orders for the washerwoman recommended me by his mistress?" I replied, "tell her I love her," and bounded into the street.

In my way home to College Green, I was accosted by a countryman, with "Please your honour, what d'ye call this square, all round here, without a name to it!" I answered him, "Tell her I love her:" and meeting a wag, who quizzing my devotion to the moon, which

"Rising in clouded majesty, at length,  
Apparent queen, unveil'd her peerless light,  
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw,"

asked me, " if I had any commands to the Lunatic Asylum?" " None," said I, " but tell her I love her."

I reached my lodgings in safety, and after taking a cup of strong coffee to prevent the soporiferous effects of " past twelve o'clock and a moonlight night," wrote the following epithalamium.

I had but little acquaintance with the muses, but as I had always been given to understand, that poetry was more seasonable on such occasions than prose, I hammered out these rhymes. I had, moreover, a considerable claim upon the bounty of the Pierides; particularly, on that of Erato, the inventress of the lute and lyre, for the stinginess of her former favours: did she not make up for her defect in this pensive strain?

The raging tumultuous sea  
 Bears (this is a fact I assure ye)  
 A striking resemblance to me,  
 Condemned without trial by jury.

I felt the delights of a calm,  
 And floated on hope's buoyant billow,  
 Till wreck'd by paternal alarm,  
 That ruin'd the peace of my pillow !

The sparrows of Dublin may grieve,  
 And chirp their love-tale through the city ;  
 But how can their music relieve  
 The agoniz'd strain of my ditty ?

Go, sweet sounding songsters, go hence !  
 Enjoy the cool shade without fetters ;  
 Nor come upon any pretence,  
 Till Nora has finish'd her letters.

Go, " tell her I love her," sweet flight,  
 While vessels on ocean are sailing ;  
 While Phœbus diffuses his light,  
 And Daffy's Elixir's availing !

While equity judges admire ;  
 While murphies in Ireland are eaten ;  
 While turf makes a Paddy's coal fire ;  
 And Howth by the surges is beaten.

The postman is twanging his horn,  
 And language can never discover,  
 With a hope, that I hope's not forlorn,  
 How fervently I am her lover !

Receive this heart-rending adieu !

By Saint Patrick we soon shall be one ;

When sorrow shall sing fillaloo !

And dull care end in laughter and fun !

The day after this astonishing effort of the muse came to life, I had the distracting mortification of seeing a fac-simile of it in a Dublin paper, with this insulting introduction from a tormenting letter-sorter.

MR. EDITOR,

HUMBLY presuming that I am not in any degree infringing upon the duties of my situation, and that a laugh in these dolorous! times may be acceptable to you, I enclose a letter for publication, which otherwise, from the joint circumstances of there being neither name subscribed, seal affixed, or superscription given thereto, can never reach it's destination, I take it to be the production of some hapless Strephon disordered in his mind; or of



some absent man, who, through his failing, has thus exposed the privacy of his meditation to the ridicule of the public eye, by the means of,

Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant,

MATTHEW MAIL.

Post Office, Dublin.

Thus provokingly thwarted, where I thought myself most secure, and should have been, but for my habitual disorder, I wished the sex, the sparrows of Dublin, Daffy's Elixir, turf, coals, potatoes, and St. Patrick, at the —— : but considering, that, as in a previous instance of miscarriage, neither Nora, nor the Neverspars, nor Matthew Mail, or any other individual, could possibly discover their author; and that my condemnation of them was unworthy of an "Absent Man," who had heretofore weathered the storm of a much

heavier oppression, I merely wished that it had occurred to me to seal and direct my letter as usual.

By patience, burthens, which at first gall our shoulders, become light and bearable; and there is but a small profit in ruminating upon past irretrievable occurrences.

The Reader may have observed, that the name of Shakspeare, our immortal bard, has been mentioned in this narrative; I felt at this period of my life as much interest in a play as I did in a romance: that is, where the characters and plot brought out any delineation of ideas congenial with my own. I do not here mention the circumstance in praise of my taste, but you must know, that Shakspeare was always a favourite of mine; and whenever the theatrical performances promised this attraction, I invariably attended them.

The Irish stage, though the nursery for the most exalted ornaments of the

London boards, is, nevertheless, but little above mediocrity in it's properties and general exhibitions: a want of due patronage may cause this evident deficiency, but it's effect is to be lamented on any ground.

Romeo and Juliet was to me, a fond enthusiast in Love's heraldry, the most exceedingly affecting play of Shakspeare's most inventive imagination. I sighed with the hero, wept with the heroine, and delightedly did I

“ See how she lean'd her cheek upon her hand:”

though, to tell the honest truth, I could not for the life of me, carry my complaisance so far as to wish

“ That I were a glove upon that hand,  
That I might touch that cheek,”

in the representation I shall describe.

Seeing in the bills of the day the

announcement of this poisoning catastrophe, I took a box, and accompanied the Neverspar family to the theatre. I thought the comical little brunette would enjoy the description given by Mercutio of Queen Mab :

“ Drawn with a team of little atomies,  
Athwart men’s noses as they lie asleep.”

The unfortunate illness of the lady, who had undertaken to portray the soft sorrows of the first of poets, however, soon threw a gloom around my expectations, and the appearance of her substitute finished the despair I had anticipated.

O, Nora ! Nora ! how had I wished before the curtain drew up to have dispatched a fiery-footed steed for thee, and placed thee by my side ! where sat the comical little brunette, negligent of sweet, impending horror, read-

ing the characters of the Farce of "Killing no Murder;" but when the heroine came on, this wish subsided: no female in the whole corps-dramatique could have acted the part with a worse grace; and no lady in the auditory, excepting, perhaps, the brunette, would have looked it so little.

Her voice too was a deep tenor, and her accent so characteristic of her country, that the most obliging stretch of imagination could never have laid the scene in Mantua. A fair confidence in her own abilities, in which, I confess, I did not participate, carried her through the play with so much spirit, that when I eagerly expected her to pour forth her soft sorrow, she uttered her soliloquies with all the pertness of a Mistress Jobson. Certain it is, that there was the "Devil to Pay!" and I was so much mortified at seeing the comical little

brunette enjoying the murder of the sweet tale, that I was determined not to countenance it by my applause.

I had on a former occasion heard a wag, by substituting the concluding word "Juliet" for that of "Romeo," in the following line :

"Romeo, Romeo ! wherefore art thou Romeo ?"

put a question, which in the present case it might have been difficult to have answered, so far as regarded the lady.

She proceeded in fine style to the garden scene, where the "pretty fool" appeared, as usual, at the balcony, and the "god of her idolatry" beneath : she very saucily told him that,

"That which we call a rose,  
By any other name would smell as sweet ;"

and hastily concluded with

“ Romeo, quit thy name,  
And for that name, which is no part of thee,  
Take all myself.”

Romeo's representative was a strong athletic Irishman, with more muscular, than mental power: in this, for once at least, fortune befriended him, as well as the lady above; for upon his replying in the appropriate words of his unrivalled author,

“ I take thee at thy word,”

Juliet, the balcony, and frontage of the veranda, descended into his unexpected arms!

The ludicrous “ fall of Bajazet” in Hogarth's Southwark Fair was eclipsed by this headlong embrace; and twenty minutes elapsed before the prostrate beauty could be prevailed upon to re-appear.

What an opportunity this, had Nora

been witness to the accident, for a converse sweet! But the comical little brunette, and her parents twain, had not concluded their flood of laughter, before the daughter of old Capulet, somewhat bruised, but no wise dejected, came forth a second time from her chamber window. Some slight manifestation of disapprobation occurring among "the gods," just as she came to this line,

"What satisfaction can'st thou have to night?"

it proved a truism, that turned their hissing into an irresistible roar, which echoed through the house.

Things now assumed a better aspect; she "cut him out in little stars," with the effective action of a notable housewife, eking out a scanty allowance of drapery, and exerted herself so much in this passage,

"Oh break my heart, poor bankrupt, break at  
once,"



that it produced the untoward fracture of an ugly broad red velvet girdle, which, though it caused a momentary titter, evidently improved her appearance. She received the news of Romeo's banishment with a declamatory tone that delighted the gallery amazingly; and really drank the friar's "potent draught" very genteelly: but in the concluding scene of the monument, she conveyed such a different character to the line,

"O churl! drink all, and leave no friendly drop  
To help me after!"

to what is intended, that I fervently hoped she might never again rise from the tomb of the Capulets; at least not to personify their lovelorn daughter.

The patience of Job, generally perennial, was now on the ebb; he declared, that he could not be satisfied, that "Killing was no Murder" in the

way he had seen it represented; and the quartette carried an adjournment from Crow's Street to Mountjoy Square, nem. con., at the conclusion of the play.

This was as unlucky a débüt for the Neverspars, as it had proved for the tearful maid, Juliet: but their primitive good-nature made ample allowance for the casualty that had destroyed the tragic bowl ere it's liquor was drunk. To me it was the greatest possible consolation, that I had not contributed any inaccuracies of conduct to the mistakes of the stage; and though Nora's brilliant form rested in the glittering ramifications of the chandelier before me, I am not aware that her appellation escaped my lips.

I should have mentioned, that the morning of this day was passed in the same company; the anterior part of it in viewing the Irish House of Parliament, now converted into the Na-

tional Bank; the Castle and Courts of Justice; Custom House and other public buildings; finishing our circuit, which, to less curious eyes, might have afforded an hebdomadal inquiry, at the Museum of a celebrated glass-blower, "just arrived from London!" He was the king of respiration! I was highly amused with the near relationship he had traced between love and air; a pedigree, I had to my cost, long, long ago, discovered! The productions of his breath were all either principals or accessories in the court of the dove-drawn queen; and my enamoured eye wandered over a chain of brittle Cupids, disporting in vitreous "yellow meads of asphodel;" or reposed on the ascending form of some Venus Anadyomene, fabricated with her attributes of the aphyia and lycostomus, and fusible as her amorous prototype!

The foam of the glassy sea was exc-

cuted to nature, and the empress of the conchologists, in an attitude the most captivating, let her hair of chrysolite hue wave over a pellucid bust of alabaster!

Some unfinished figures of Hermes, Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and Thalia, gave the fairest promise of perfection; while many a bed of the brightest carmine formed rosy couches for recumbent doves. In this emblematical Heaven of profane history, satire, keen, and as it were episodical satire! exerted a baleful influence.

The censorious king of the frangible repository of curiosities, wisely conceiving, that where love was, mischief should be near at hand, had in this allusive region of delight introduced the diabolical majesty of darkness, as companion with Venus in her throne of love; and of all the bewitching specimens of his frail art, that di-

vided her choice, what think ye, my gentle Reader, the comical little brunette at last selected? Verily, the god of love astride a brayer, and drawn by the devil! This was monstrous! it showed her contempt of his soft power; and could I subscribe to so criticising an exposition of it? No: I offered not to be the bearer of high treason against the state, of which I was, however unworthy, a tender subject; and the conquering, unconquered, comical little brunette, carried the commentary in her own ridicule, a proper depository for so heinous a burden.

It was placed, as a memento of her good taste, on the chimney-piece of the drawing-room in Mountjoy Square; and Mrs. Neverspar would frequently ask me, if I had ever seen the magic of the glass-blower's crucible during the sojourn I made at Athlone.

Although, literally, somewhat declining in hope, I determined to possess it in a figurative sense.

“ Hope springs eternal in the human breast,  
Man never is, but always to be blest.”

“ Hope is the balm and life blood of the soul ; it pleases and it lasts :” and I purchased a semblance of this divinity leaning on a slender anchor (alas ! too often the case) to adorn my lodging, in opposition to the preposterous ornament of the comical little brunette’s mantle-piece.

“ *Est natura hominum novitatis avida.*”

The Neverspars were new to me ; by their means I seceded a little from the solitude I had imposed upon myself ; my fondness for eels gradually subsided into an endurance of other animal food ; and as I have before observed, although I

did not intend in the remotest degree, "to pin my faith upon their sleeve," I considered their occasional society no way inferior to my harassing contemplations.

Where a person's spirits are not altogether at low-water mark, an intermixture of objects and occurrences tends, sometimes effectually, to keep up the tide; and as mine had more pressure from a temporary than an ultimate despair, I always found that I returned to my wilderness of reflection with more quicksilver in my composition, than I could muster upon leaving it. The association I had contracted was inconclusive of happiness;

"O happiness, our being's end and aim!"

but it afforded a present styptic to the deep wounds that Nora had inflicted; and the comical little brunette, whether from habit or positive improvement,

undoubtedly appeared in a more supportable point of view. Custom is a great reconciler of early prejudices. Now do not imagine, kind Reader, for one moment, that any tergiversation of my former troth is about to be brought on the canvass. No, no: Mercutio in the play says of the heir to the house of Montague,

“ Now is he for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in! Laura to his lady was but a kitchen-wench, Dido a dowdy! and Cleopatra a gipsy! Helen and Hero, hildings and harlots! Thisbe a gray eye, or so, but not to the purpose.”

These comparisons suit mine, which is to assure you, that Nora and the comical little brunette were still with me the bane and antidote of love!

Neverspar and his wife were beginning to be endeared to me by a perpetual display of good-nature: not that they made an ostentation of it; it was on the contrary a quality of their dis-



position, which, like the genial dew-drop, invigorated the arid stems of life, and shed it's latent, though perceptible influence, on all they said and did.

Socrates was supposed to have repented of his conjugal vows to Xantippe, but the sun never went down on the anger of Mr. and Mrs. Never-spar.

Gossips have an anecdote explanatory of the origin of matrimony, and it's good or evil effects in high estimation among them.

It was once told me, as an infallible method of discovering, how to discern between an intended and a chance match. Marriages, say they, are made in the regions above, and the happy duplicates find their way to our lower abodes in jars expressly modelled to contain them. The rapid transition from the one element to the other, is frequently productive of a fracture in the vessels, which leaving

the distributed parties in ether, tends, not very uncommonly, to an union extraneous from the original design. A connexion is thus formed which was never meant; and the feuds and dissensions, which now and then imbitter the matrimonial state, arise from the intercourse of couples, who, commencing their downward voyage in separate jars, become, in the concussion of pottery, partners for life, though not joint partakers of it's primary blessing.

The inference I drew from this story was, that the Neverspar package reached our terrestrial globe preserved and unbroken.

The thirst for novelty, I have just alluded to, and the consequent impression that any new scene makes on our minds, will possibly account for the minute description, into which I have entered, of my first knowledge of

these dear and inestimable friends of my Uncle Singlestick.

I shall not, however, in the progress of my relation continue to trouble my Reader with the sections and intersections of a regular series of days, weeks, and months, whereon and wherein such and such a plan was devised, and so and so was executed, bringing him with mathematical precision to the conclusion of the narrative; but he will be good enough to take the remaining particulars in as orderly a manner as I can arrange them, ever holding in memory the caution I heretofore gave, that as perfection is not a synonymous term with mortality, he must not expect it in an "Absent Man."

Job's patience was now put to a trial, as severe in point of corporeal sufferance, as could attack him. I found him on the sofa with all the

initiatory horrors of a fit of the gout; and it is said, that Job himself would have winced on a similar occasion. The easy-chair, the large shoe, the ample hose, the crutch, the ottoman uncovered: all, all bespoke the expectation of this most unwelcome visitant, and all required the unimpairable endurance of a Neverspar.

I understood that he was hereditarily subject to this excruciating malady: it was only an additional reason for his fortitude, and coming in the autumn of the year, fears (and who amongst us can avoid their intrusion?) were entertained that his creeping, sluggish, companion would pass the winter with him.

Job had incautiously indulged in too free a libation of claret upon first coming to Ireland: he found the quality of this wine particularly fine in Dublin, and anticipated no harm from drinking an occasional bumper of it to

the friends he had left behind him : in this list he invariably included my Uncle Singlestick, and his good nature, circulating with the circulation of the glass, would have given a flavour to the most inferior vintage, had his toast been even an exceptionable one.

We not unfrequently are kept in ignorance of the price of a luxury, though perhaps too ready to put an excessive value upon it, till the balance day arrives, and Job was now threatened with a heavy payment for his racy claret.

His mind still, however, preserved it's usual tone of undisturbed peace, the harmony of his nature kept him aloof from any encroachments of care; and I wished, as I beheld him prostrate on the couch, which he was almost fearful of touching with his foot, and deprived of the enjoyment of nearly every alimentary pleasure, when I saw him, I say, in this distressing

prédicament, with a smile on his cheerful countenance, and not a sigh escaping him, or a complaint quivering on his lip, I wished, that if in the page of my destiny, the Parcæ had set me down for a fit of the gout, I might follow the excellent example of Job Neverspar of Placid Hall.

He received the praises and dispraises of a fashionable remedy for his disorder with equal indifference, though he was too good-natured to upbraid the friends who mentioned its composing properties, implying at the same time, that he had no intention of making his own quietus by the cure proposed to him; that, he jocularly said, he would leave for his Irish friends, when necessity might prompt them to the experiment, and closed a series of the most unanswerable positions by promising to drink largely; (here I feared that he began to falter, knowing how inviting one glass

is to the taste of another, and so on, toties quoties) but my apprehension subsided upon his assuring us it should only be of the cup of patience; and he laughingly told the comical little brunette, who, poor thing, warmed his stockings and mixed his oatmeal potation (next to patience in her dear father's pharmacopœia,) with an affection that would have graced my Nora! that he should certainly find his cure at the bottom of it!

I pleased him greatly by an anecdote of a person in a similar situation, who begged very hard for permission to treat himself with a single bumper of Hermitage. His importunity at length wringing his physician's slow consent, he restricted him to one glass; but repented of his ready acquiescence on hearing that his unruly patient had pledged him in three times three!

Neverspar thought the doctor much more in fault than his tippling sufferer,

and almost hinted that he should have done the same.

Thus, this painful disease was conducive of mirth and good-humour, and had it not been for the awkward, and otherwise unaccountable appearance of the paraphernalia around me, I should have fancied myself offering a genuine sacrifice at the Temple of Momus, rather than inclining over the pillowed sofa of a sickening friend !

“*Levius fit patientiâ quicquid corrigere est nefas,*”

was a maxim to which Neverspar adhered most implicitly ; it was, he said, wrong to correct the fit, for which assertion he had classical authority, and he was sure that it would be alleviated by patience.

I have heard of a terrible dismay being often occasioned by a mutability of temper in one or other of the contracting parties to a marriage so-



lemnity, and that when the gorgeous apparel of the bridal morn has been the sole employment of an eyry of town milliners for many a day, and the legal preparations have been signed and sealed with a trembling hesitating hand, the equipage ordered, and the establishment provided, this indecision has caught the whole frame, and the "baseless fabric of the vision leaves not a wreck behind."

Whether this wavering tendency is attributable to a sudden discovery of the fractured jar I have touched upon in an earlier page, or takes it's origin in the instability of all human affairs, it is sometimes equally to be lamented, and the necessary abandonment of their excursive plan, it's prospects and preparations, caused an equal degree of regret to the good Mrs. Neverspar and her daughter Fatima. I am, however, willing to assure myself, that their lamentation sprung from a fountain of

pity for the object of their hinderance, and that the shallow recondite waters of pleasure found no sympathetic tear in their eyes.

My geographical communications were, as it turned out, quite sufficient; and the comical little brunette refuted my controvertible localities by the aid of a map purchased for the tour. She now saw the real situation of the Lakes of Killarney, entered Bantry Bay, cast a wistful look at Limerick, and crossed the Giant's Causeway, as many a credited and highly celebrated well-informed and intelligent classical traveller had done before her by the fire-side, and that which was wanting in natural scenery was made up for in a fertile imagination, aided by the useful observations I was so capable of contributing, and so proud of letting her know that it was in my power to furnish.

The comical little brunette as an in-

terlude to this soft dalliance with Hibernia, which indeed only reminded Neverspar of his infirmity, amused him very good-humouredly with the exhibition of some Lilliputian waltzers she had purchased at a library in College Green. This dwarf pigmy race were very satirical little fellows, and like the king of respiration, and emperor of all blowers, blended the "snarling cynic" with the amusement they afforded. They were about the height of the two first joints of a middle finger, and dressed in the airy costume of the profession they copied. Their support in this bitter world was composed of four bristles cut to an equal length, and equidistant from each other: their mould was of cork, light-headed, light-fingered, light-footed gentry, and they were framed to imitate and ridicule the circumvolutions and circumrotations of a style of dancing recommended by fashion, not patronized by

taste: and the mode by which they accomplished it was effected by the vibration of the sounding board of the piano, on which, in close embracing groups, they whirled their giddy way, and whirled and wheeled, and wheeled and whirled again, till at length they fell as others would have done in a similar pursuit in Neverspar's approbation.

One morning during the visit of the surly guest above described, Mrs. Neverspar read from the newspaper an account, always flourished and highly coloured in such instances, of a sale of some fashionable garniture, which Mr. Auctioneer "assured the ladies, particularly, would fully recompense them for any little time and attention they might be pleased to bestow upon it."

The paragraph gained a brace of advocates immediately; so winning is any circumstance that opens a field for

curiosity ; and I was requested by the ladies to afford the use of my head in case any great bargains should become irresistible.

The trio, O, Nora ! O for thy more equal arm ! sallied forth to fulfil the designs of the advertiser, or in other words to have their pockets picked ; and seeing in our road a vast concourse of miserable looking citizens apparently in dreadful consternation, I was desired to impart any knowledge I might possess of the cause of the fray. “ Oh it’s only the Black Cart, Madam.” “ La, Sir,” (says the comical little brunette) “ pray what may that be !” “ Why, madam, you must know, that this beautifully constructed city, in that part of it called the ‘ Old Town,’ contains an assemblage of wretched habitations, the wretched abodes of the wretched people now before you. They have no occupation, and are merely mecha-

nics in the trade of begging: this system is their only pursuit, and here at least they are very industrious.

“The police of Dublin endeavour by all fair means to keep this numerous clan in proper subjection; but there are individuals in this, as in other communities, governed by a ruler, not of the people’s choice, whose disposition to anarchy, republicanism, and insubordination, becomes exceedingly troublesome, especially when all control, moral, social, and political, is held in such utter contempt by their ring-leaders, who, having arisen from a tainted stock themselves, are perpetually sowing the seed of vice amongst their infatuated followers; this, taking an early thrift, for ‘ill weeds grow apace,’ in their separate breasts, ‘spreads it’s poisonous qualities over the whole body, and the infection becomes general; a canker succeeds, and all hope of any healthy amendment being vain,

this blighted and unpitied race continue in their diseased state to the close of their existence. ‘Indolence is the parent of vice!’ Law becomes their laughing-stock, and government their aversion.

“An active intelligent man is, however, notwithstanding their antipathy to order, appointed by the police to superintend these refractory people; and from the peculiar duties of the sphere in which he moves, he has been so commonly styled ‘the king of the beggars,’ that he is as well-known by that name, as the residence of the Lord Lieutenant is by the appellation of ‘the Vice-regal Lodge.’

“His presence among this lawless brotherhood is, for the time, attended by every mark of personal respect: but he shares the common fate of monarchs; and the subject, who was foremost to bow the knee before him, is not unfrequently, perhaps from an im-

bibed idea of equality, the first to pick a hole in his coat, as he leaves the mendicant generation in the rear.

“The Black Cart, madam, is a kind of ruse de guerre, for when positive commands would only promote disorder and commotion, his majesty thinks it more wise, knowing how unpopular he is in the estimation of his people, to succeed by stratagem where force might fail; and consequently issues his daily royal mandate, ‘that the said Black Cart be put in motion and kept in revolution in terrorem throughout the city.’ His faithful emissaries, the police, constantly attend it’s progress, and if any suspicious character or characters be seen lurking about a great man’s door, or congregating to compose a tale of woe, that might work upon the feelings of the unwary passenger, or placing or dislocating any false legs or arms, or obscuring or patching up any real eye or eyes, or other-



wise infringing upon the good order of things: his said majesty's explicit injunctions are, that the said police show any and every such offender or offenders the environs of the city on the elevated seat of the Black Cart, and land them eventually at his Majesty's Bridewell for the better management of his unruly subjects. I must, madam, in conclusion, observe further, that the charitable and benevolent disposition of his present majesty, the king of the beggars, is the just theme of universal encomium; and that no panegyric of mine could, were I to wish it until the opposite sides of our beautiful bay met in mid ocean, add to the already overflowing measure of his merited reputation.

“The disturbance of social order you have just noticed, madam, is occasioned by the distinct rumbling of the wheels of the Black Cart, a sound from which the culprits are well ac-

customed to flee, and their confusion will speedily be increased, for see, it approaches." The cleanser of the Augean stable passed us as we reached the place of our destination.

I thus imparted what little knowledge I had of the moving scene in my most collected and approved manner. I began to flatter myself, that I had overcome that unfortunate absence of mind, which occasioned me so much inconvenience as well as my friends, and that I was making progress in that calm region of thought and intellect, which I was so ambitious of obtaining. But, ah me! how did the following occurrences falsify my hopes! Nora still bewitched me!

An auction is of all others a kill-time, that obtains most in the fashionable circles: it has so various a claim upon the attention, and creates such an imperceptible impulse for the attainment of "vertu," that many a cap-

tivated purchaser has been at a loss for an adequate museum, in which to exhibit the articles of taste, when he has conveyed them home, that opened his purse-strings, aided by the enslaving rhetoric of the orator when there.

In the present instance, Fame had sounded her trumpet far and near, and curiosity, as illustrated in the ample eager group of amateur old china dealers, and deceitful furbishers of spurious paintings, was at its height.

We entered a large room resounding with the impressive eloquence of "knock them down!" and being persons, as the Reader may guess, of some appearance, were accommodated with seats contiguous to the pulpit of Demosthenes.

Fatima was soon caught in the mesh spread for her cornucopia of cash, and I was requested to nod and nod till bidding was on the wane. At length a rich prize of real Brussels lace, all

manufactured doubtless within an hour's walk of the scene 'efore u; and a plaster mould of Time mowing down a nest of Cupids, frolicking on a bed of roses, intended as a companion to the glass-blower's satirical work, were declared to be my property: and the youthful clerk asking me to what address I would please to have the lot delivered, it was my unhappy lot to say, "The Rev. Arthur Cavannah's, Athlone!"

This dissonant declaration diverted the comical little brunette exceedingly; and causing a determined flood of laughter among some ladies who occupied the benches behind us, I turned round to see to whom I had been the cause of so much mirth, and to my inexpressible confusion, whom should I see, on the broad grin, but the rosy Miss O'Carol, the fancier of pomegranates! and her excellent philosophical mother!

The little remaining reason I had

now left me fled. A puzzled, rack-ing, incoherent, phrenetic, gesticulation succeeded. I hurried over, in my wanderings, the misfortunes at Crazy Castle, the demolition of the chimney ornaments, and the partridge and custard; the two-pronged fork stuck in my throat, and the table-cloth yet fixed in my button-hole, brought down a second time upon me a load of woe.

I continued nodding (as I supposed afterwards was the case,) for Milton, Pope, and the whole collection of English Poets, were put down to the same direction I inadvertently gave, and Cavannah, who owned them before, was again made master of a duplicate assortment! I dared not for some time, by venturing another curve of my perplexed head, to accost Mrs. O'Carol or her rosy daughter.

Nora, and the recollection that I had by my absence forfeited that claim to their favour, from which I expected

preference in love, and the fear that I might have been detected in my attempt to join hands in the Phoenix Park, though baffled by the interposition of the carriage window, all argued against the bow I was meditating, and Mrs. Neverspar for a time preserved my original position by begging of me to bid for a purple morocco Grecian couch, upon which she thought her gouty husband might experience some repose.

After having encountered a phalanx of merciless brokers, who upon similar occasions invariably pride themselves on their opposition, I was declared victor; but the prudent comical little brunette whispered to her mamma to give her own card of address.

My delighted eyes were next feasted with an excellent cast of "the great and good King William!" The place, the crowd, the comical little brunette,

were all forgotten ; the griping brokers requested to examine the sooty physiognomy of the dear bust ! I caught it from their grasp ! The glorious majesty of William was now put up at twenty ten-pennies ! I run him as high as ten pounds against the brokers ; when turning to the clerk I urged him to close the contest : the spirit of the brokers however increasing, I purchased the shade of William at double the money ! and holding in triumph the royal legator, thus at last essayed to address Mrs. O'Carol, whose presence had reminded me of the destruction of his prototype ! " Madam, I now, as you see, possess a fac simile of the bust, which I, in an absent moment, destroyed at Crazy Castle ! happy, indeed, shall I be made, if by your presenting it to Mr. O'Carol, I may hope that I am healing the infliction, the unintentional infliction of a severe wound : " Here, as the fates made no

bones of me, I added to my former aberrations that of mentioning names.

I stared Mrs. O'Carol full in the face, but the philosophical lady kept her countenance so admirably, that I began to suspect I had mistaken my object, and that the similarity between the person before me and the real Mrs. O'Carol had caused another mistake.

I have little doubt of the interpretation the company put upon my conduct in either case; and I am candid enough to acknowledge, that it merited any comment, however severe, they might please to visit it with.

I was sufficiently sane to bear away my victory under my arm, and the comical little brunette under the other; and the party, headed by Job's better half, proceeded to congratulate him on the acquisition of his Grecian couch.



The evening of this eventful day witnessed the mortification of this placid sufferer, upon discovering that his wife had been duped by the brokers, and that the repose she had kindly purchased for him was injured and unfit for use.

The comical little brunette, too, missed the scythe of old Time, which diminished the point of her satire, and rendered her bed of roses a retreat for the sportive Cupids, unimpaired by the hoary mower, who threatened them in vain.

These disappointments were only productive of a laugh, and the unruffled tide of the Neverspar disposition maintained it's tranquil flow.

Hearing that a troop of horse was expected to land in the course of a day or two at the Pigeon House, in consequence of some serious disturbances in the vicinity of Athlone, (O Nora! how, thought I, should I be delighted

{with a commission even in it's awkward squad!) I proposed that we should witness the landing of the "defence of the country." This challenge being accepted, I again embraced the bust of the "good king," and retiring to my uncaptivating apartments, and my insurmountable ideas, with every intention to immure my elaborate burden in all possible safety, I for once contrived to effect my purpose, and had the gratification of securing him under lock and key, in the excellent society of Milton, and Hector and Andromache, until a favourable opportunity should occur to dispatch the cargo to Cavannah's abode. These worthies might, if reanimated for about ten minutes, have been exceedingly entertaining to each other, particularly as a great part of the history of the one would be altogether new to the rest, and the various occupations of the

whole have produced that novelty now so universally admired.

I attributed my good conduct of the bust to the circumstance of it's having no material analogy to that train of cogitation, which might bring Nora Cavannah before my view : and the kind Reader has undoubtedly observed, that where I had the exercise of my mind uncontrolled by any abstracting and distracting influence of this species, I was generally as capable of fair ratiocination as many other persons, who, affecting a studied attention to the legitimate forms of society, frequently illustrate by their intemperate measures, that notwithstanding their endeavours at a contrary character, their true description was still to be found in the words which openly bespeak mine.

The gossip of the morning having announced the arrival of the warriors of the sable plume, I called in Mount-

joy Square to retrieve the gauntlet I had thrown down, and attend the comical little brunette, who was much addicted to sights, and her amiable slender mamma, who from propriety, more than inclination, joined in the peripatetic exercises to the Pigeon House : poor Job still moved but in idea, and I left him on the summit of the Wicklow mountains, enjoying the imaginary splendour of the surrounding scenery, with much more real satisfaction of countenance than I have seen beaming from the impenetrable lines of many an immovable physiognomy, apparently dead to the glories of the creation when actually presented with them.

Upon our arrival at the point of disembarkation, we were wonderfully struck with the appearance, then novel, of the military costume, which custom has now established ; but the first sight of an enormous antique helmet,

overpowered by a waving mass of the blackest horse hair, and confined under the throat of the wearer by a heavy brassy scale; the thick mustache on the upper lip, the loose flowing fur pelisse, the blood-coloured pantaloons-overall, the massy chain, the enormous spur, the gorgeous trappings of the war-horse, the rich sabretache, the embroidered housings, one and all demanded our attention, and excited our surprise.

Cæsar crossing the Rubicon, and heading a hostile army on the plains of Pharsalia, might have looked uncommonly fierce at Pompey in this masquerade: but I should as readily have suspected the Pope of apostacy, as that a British officer would in the eighteenth century have been partly apparelled in the ornaments of the year 40 B. C.

The Spectator tells us, that “ nature

{designed the head as the cupola to the most glorious of her works;" how far the ponderous helm of art exhibited the dome to advantage is not for me; "an Absent Man," to determine. It struck me, that the proportion was destroyed, and the symmetry lost. However, the comical little brunette declared, "it was an extremely pretty dress, and very tasty and complete."

I always yielded in matters of taste to the ladies, and would not attempt to argue the point, though I thought at the time, that if I had been inclined to have split upon straws, Mrs. Neverspar would have sided with me on the field of battle.

Our eyes becoming somewhat reconciled, as well as our minds made up to the landing of the Romans in the green Isle of Erin, I fancied (being now in possession of myself,) that I had discovered an intimate friend in

the disguise of a successor of the Julian family.

I asked a soldier, who stood near me, the name of the officer giving directions to the men unlading the transport. He replied, "Count Vanderheyden." This titular addition I could but consider as an antiphrasis. No, no, it was impossible, thought I, that the puny, sickly, good little fellow, who had so often assisted me in robbing an orchard, and was constantly on the apothecary's list, could now be transformed into a Count, and at the head of a host of heroes !

" Seeking the bubble reputation  
E'en in the cannon's mouth."

And yet I recollected the face of little Van ! the Count ! The Count ! no, it could not be : yes it was, and I fancied, that, if it were deprived for a mo-

ment of it's incumbrances, I could trace every feature to it's original impression.

Pliny says of Cæsar, that he could employ at the same time his ears to listen, his eyes to read, his hand to write, and his mind to dictate! One of these avocations was as much as I could compass; and I called upon my eyes to read the lines horizontal, diagonal, and perpendicular, in the Count's phiz, being as sure that it was the very identical little Van, my school-fellow, as I was confident it could not be he.

This anxious suspense was immediately removed upon the removal of the Count's helmet, which seemed to be a vast relief to him! It certainly proved a relief to me, for on the instant, the puny orchard robber stood before me! I flew up to him; but, being always modest, the little Count appalled me, and I stood, not knowing



whether to retreat or advance. In a dubious medium of uncertainty, the comical little brunette, as was her practice, laughed at my evident distress; and her mamma rebuked her in my hearing, to show that such conduct had not the sanction of her approbation. Van in the mean time beheld me in a kind of suspended animation; and though my wasted form, the poor remains of a series of shrinking calamities, had preserved but little of its earlier image, his mind, contemplative and premeditative, supplied every deficiency of my former outward appearance: he saw me! he knew me! he embraced me!

I introduced my long-lost, unexpectedly recovered playmate, associate, marshal, Count Vanderheyden, to Mrs. Neverspar and the simpering comical little brunette; and he politely attended us (leaving the requisite directions, from which we had

averted him, with a confidential sergeant) on our return to the hospitable mansion of gout and good-nature.

The intimacy I have mentioned to have formerly subsisted between us was contracted at that period of life, when, as my acknowledged and very worthy good friend above quoted tells us, that boys are seen

“ Creeping like snails unwillingly to school.”

I need scarcely add, that he was of Dutch extraction. His parents had by the ravages of a storm, which encountered and finally subdued their richly freighted vessel on its passage to this country, been lowered in the scale of monied people, from a state of affluence to that of a comfortable mediocrity.

The reserve, however, by management, was an ample provision; and they learnt from their misfortune to

husband what remained to them of their shipwrecked treasure. The consequence also of this metamorphosis in their golden dreams was, that their children were taught to initiate themselves in the wiles of this world, where otherwise it's shoals and quicksands might not have been exposed to their view; for rich folk have seldom time for any thing but the expenditure or further accumulation of their coffers: but in this instance

“ *Meliora pii docuere parentes ;*”

and the infants were told, they must one day or other fight for themselves.

It appeared, as we proceeded, that in furtherance of this notion, my friend little Van, the Count! had, upon quitting the academical trammels, the relaxation of which had, *memiserum!* rendered Ireland within the bounds of my tether, enrolled his name in the volume

of Mars, about the same time that I enlisted under the banners of his all-subduing queen consort! The contrast in the following fortune of the twin satchel-bearers was most oppressive to me, and

“Made each particular hair to stand on end.”

Van, “the Count,” young in war, though matured in glory, “bore his blushing honours thick upon him.” I, the “Absent Man,” had only conducted a fruitless siege: the enemy had forced me to retreat; I was too much wounded to renew the attack! an aged faithful ally had determined to defend the fortress of his hopes, till the last drop of blood, and my escalade fell from it’s walls, hurled into the dark despair of the circumvallation that skirted the victorious battlements.

The kind Reader has probably observed, that throughout the pages of

this narrative I have ever been a wholesale dealer in hope; and though I am altogether of his opinion, that hope without foundation is an "*ignis fatuus*," that should not be encouraged and pursued, I still think, that the sentence of "*dum spiro spero*" is as good a motto on the dexter side of an Absent Man's shield, as the words "*nil desperandum*" would prove to the sinister; and as it is always best to have two strings to our bow, it might not be amiss to have them made of equally durable materials.

The anecdotes of a soldier of fortune, always amusing, beguiled the way to Dublin, as far as my punctilio of behaviour would enable me to discern, by no means unprofitably. Curiosity now and then interfering with her goggle-eyed distension of pupil, I heard Mrs. Neverspar endeavouring, by all the circuitous inquiries of an inquisitive female, to learn from the

Count if by affinity, or by consanguinity, he was at all related to the famous Dutch painter, whose appellation he carried.

A digression of thought upon the comical little brunette's noticing the rays of light darting along the Wicklow Mountains, forbade our coming into his genealogical succession; and the polite Count immediately declared (in unison with the enraptured Fatima) that the view around him was much superior to any cisalpine scenery he had ever beheld.

There was yet, however, one point to be cleared up, before I could wholly persuade myself of the identity of Vanderheyden. The assumption of "the Count" was too much for affection to excuse without a satisfactory explanation. With this only remaining question on my mind, I ventured to beg of little Van to pour forth the sources of his ennoblement.

The diffident Pangloss says, that “on their own merits, modest men are dumb;” but the awkward, variable, alternate red and white, in the school-boy’s face, had by the bronze of time, and the vicissitudes of temperature which it had experienced, become settled into an unblushing, not to say an impudent visage in the Count, and with somewhat of secret pride, though no pomp of ostentation, he informed us, (and this was surely not confident,) that fortune had favoured him “in the imminent deadly breach” of a German fortress. It was, he said, in the possession of the French, and had through a series of desperate attacks resisted the united valour of the allied forces: till exhausted in supplies of every kind, and diminished in numbers as in ammunition, (a corps of the enemy who bivouacked in some unsuspected entrenchments, having cut off the succours they so urgently re-

quired,) it was declared to be impracticable to effect a breach.

The possession of the fortress was of the last consequence, not only from present necessity, but with a view to any ulterior operations that might ensue from it; and the surmise that the anticipated relief was destroyed by an insidious antagonist led also to the conclusion, that their destruction must soon follow upon his other success.

In this critical situation of things, Vanderheyden volunteered the forlorn hope! The breach was effected! the fortress surrendered! and the British ensign triumphantly waved over the fallen banner of despotic tyranny! His wounds were considered, he said, to be mortal, and a rapid delirium, occasioned at first by the acuteness of his sufferings, deprived him for some weeks of the sense of pain.

He then began gradually to recover, and was rewarded for his intrepidity



by an honorary distinction, which the Austrian Cabinet had graciously been pleased to bestow upon him, in the presentation of a collar of a military order. He appeared to be perfectly aware that this badge was merely a thing *sui generis*, and that its nominal adoption in this country must depend most exclusively upon the courtesy of those, who thought proper to count him among their friends.

He humorously said, that soldiers were always fond of recurring to scenes rendered in any way memorable by the prowess of their officers, and that he expected the dignified title of "Count Vanderheyden" to extend no further than the circle of his own troop, to the command of which he had arisen by the circumstance that so far warranted the title.

I was thus gratified to have my doubts so agreeably dissipated, and continued during the remaining part of our interview to Count little Van

(who deserved perhaps a more substantial acknowledgment of his services,) as much as possible.

This period was very circumscribed, and all the entreaties of Mrs. Never-spar (the comical little brunette of course had not a word to say, though I fancied she admired the Count, or perhaps his dress) were unavailing; and the society of little Van, the Count, could not upon any terms be obtained for the day. His orders, he said, were preremptory, and must be obeyed, though his inclination suffered; and as the march to Athlone must positively be commenced on the following morning, he requested permission to return to the vessel, that his absence might not impede the necessary arrangements.

Here then we parted with our Count of the horse-hair crest! but not until (happy presence of mind!) I had requested him to convey with his bag-

gage, a small parcel to the vicar of Athlone; to whom, being as well as himself a particular friend of mine, I should be rejoiced to introduce him by letter of recommendation.

The sable plume nodding assent, it rapidly vanished from my sight (like an April cloud) at the angular turning of the Square.

Neverspar unaffectedly, and with his wonted good-nature, assured me, that he should have been happy to have shaken the Old Roman by the hand, if he could have been prevailed upon to have taken his mutton with him. "You, Sir," said he, pointing to his unwrapped limb, "must have toasted the exploits at the German fortress!"

In this kind of gradual progressive advance, time, "who steals our years away," passed with us.

I was the alternate sport of expectation and despondency, and though

though the acute pang of my first absence from Nora was a little softened by the balm of the hoary sage, oblivion of the past, could not, by all the offices of attention, good-nature, and a constant unrepublishing endurance of my failing, which ever welcomed my visits under Neverspar's roof, be commuted into an entire approbation of the present scene: I confess that they had their effect, but not to any material extent; and Fatima, though she had now considerably won upon my esteem, heard nothing of my love.

Some of my antipathies to the comical little brunette yet preserved their original force, though, I must acknowledge, that others were frittered away.

The image of Nora, which generally interrupted the recurrence of any lucid interval, was particularly (now that I was about to give it by my letters to the view of another) very au-

thoritative at this period ; and as I perceived that a fit was coming on, which, militating against the evenness of my mind, might lead to further expositions, as unnecessary as lamentable, I quitted the society of my friends for the solitude in which I proposed to make preparations for the dispatch of my worthies to Athlone.

The truth is, that I cherished a fervent hope, through the intimacy that subsisted between “ the Count ” and the “ Absent Man,” and by a little management on his part, though I could not dream of much on my own, to revisit, (O healing thought!) the transparent Shannon, and in it’s natural mirror again to behold the reflected form of Cavannah’s dark-eyed daughter. I had for a time serious thoughts of assuming the disguise of a Roman warrior ; and thus by taking an introduction, written by my own hand, “ in favour of my particular friend,”

to re-enter the abode of Nora; but I feared that this unformed and romantic idea savoured more of theatrical than real accomplishment.

I had now so far seceded from a former position of mine, "that the Camelion's dish was food for one," as to entertain solid doubts of its sufficiency for two. The Reader may remember, if not an "Absent Man," that I had long ago relinquished my singular indulgence in eels; and I knew full well by tradition, and by experience, that Cupid was a terribly bad man-cook. Moreover, I felt a rooted conviction, that my Uncle would disinherit me, and of our total abandonment by Arthur Cavannah, should an elopement occur. Here then I paused again, eventually resolving to confide in my friend Vanderheyden, who, without letting him into the secrecy of my breast, which would have been ridiculously intem-

perate, I meant to visit, so soon as he should become a neighbour of my still-adored Nora.

After this conflict of opposite ideas was thus disposed of, I proceeded to procure a packing case, whercin my worthies were to be encompassed: Milton, as the most solid of the party, and the least open to injury from any occasional rubs he might receive, first entered the receptacle prepared for him: Hector and Andromache, enfolded in some loose sheets of Pope's Homer, were thus again translated, and the lady was granted, as she requested, "an early tomb!" "The great and good king William" next descended into the envelope, in all the stern majesty of dust and bronze. I dared not to tell him, that he was to be conducted by a Dutchman, lest he should wish to enter upon an historical disquisition with him, on the Orange Societies. Ophelia tells the

beauteous majesty of Denmark, "There's a daisy; I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my Father died:" and I, in humble imitation of this tenderly loving unwitting maid, would have sent Nora some hope, but it vanished all when my anchor snapped.

Ah! what an opportunity to write! No letter-sorter! to stand between your love and you: no signature required! no superscription needed! but if any, addressed under cover to the Cook, to be forwarded by the first conveyance! No burning-wax wanting to make an impression!

Patience, gentle Reader! I did write of course, but as a punishment for your suspicion that I did not, you shall never hear a word of the letter.

By the time that "the iron-tongue of midnight had tolled twelve," I had completed my laborious undertaking; and considering that Nora rather in-



interrupted me in it's close, I got through with it much sooner than I had any reason to expect I should.

With what kind of repose I was favoured, as a reward for my trouble, the Reader is already well enough acquainted with my nocturnal vagaries to conjecture without farther remark.

I certainly rejoiced in the day-spring, and, uprising from my tumbled couch, caught the precious casket in my arms, and ran out to meet Vanderheyden, whose brazen clarions bespoke his near approach !

“ The glorious chief resumes  
His tow'ry helmet, black with shading plumes ! ”

takes my resolution to visit him, my close-packed worthies, my letters of recommendation, and my adieu !

I returned to my tender-hearted landlady, with the loss of my right eye, like the Calendars in the Arabian

Night's Entertainments, or not to amplify misfortune, the deprivation of it's exercise, from the effect of the dust raised by the trample of the retreating power of Vanderheyden's coursers.

This very good woman had by a kind of pseudodiploma, originating, as I once foolishly thought my reintroduction at Cavannah's might have done, in the proper hand-writing of the person concerned; and deriving every contingent advantage, arising from an unimpeached practice in the several mysteries of pharmacy. through a long series of years; attained as her bright reward the high fame, which established her as the Queen of Charlatans. Far be it from me to breathe the breath of calumny on a reputation so deservedly exalted: but, when I tell the Reader, that the Majesty of Quacks had one fair book, as inseparable from her as her heart-strings, and that this said book was "the Dis-

pensatory !” I shall leave him to form his own conclusions upon her science in physic. However, she was not entirely bound by this inestimable volume: there were many extraneous vegetable preparations, decoctions, concoctions, syrups, acids, herbal abductions, and draughts in every sense cordial, of which this good doctress was complete mistress, and administered with the most unqualified success.

Amongst other never-failing applications, she possessed at the head of the list “an infallible eye-water !” It signified but little in what manner the organ of sight should be impeded in it’s usual functions, whether injured by a blow, by cold, by heat, by the flight of a swarm of gnats, by the effect of a concealed lash, by the puncture of a busy fly, or by the lodgment of subtle dust; her art was superior to any accidental calamity of

any kind, and her eye-water subdued every otherwise irreducible inflammation.

The painful state of my swollen optics attracted her majesty's notice, and produced, as soon as she had examined into the cause of my suffering, and blamed me for not seeing the danger in which I was, (which by the by spoke for itself) a pint bottle of "the finest eye water ever yet discovered!" She had the receipt, she told me as she applied the collyrium, from a maiden aunt, who was a little known for her skill in medicine, but not so celebrated as herself; who had it from her grandfather, who practised in Connaught, who had it from his maternal uncle, who was nephew to a famous physician, who reigned with undivided prosperity in the court of Queen Anne of England! She added, to this enormous pedigree, that she had determined, upon coming into possession of

the receipt, "a fortune for any one," never to advertise the cure; that she distributed the eye-water gratis amongst the poor in great abundance; and that she hoped, when her eyes were closed, her successor would continue to do the same.

I derived not more than half the information she intended me by this summary history, owing to the acute sting that accompanied the application; but in justice to my landlady, who was really a well-meaning woman, though no witch! I certainly should add, that from some cause or other, I recovered the temporary failure of my right eye in a few days, but it opened upon a scene of misery, which it had been better far for me, that the dust had concealed for ever!

Before I unfold the page of distress, I must presume, that the logical Reader flatters himself, he has caught me tripping, in a palpable, egregious error

of representation, by my heaping the unnecessary indignities of a deal packing case upon the head of the substitute for the calcined king, when the O'Carols themselves were in Dublin, and would have taken him into their custody; but if I could impart to him half the horror I experienced at the bare idea of ever seeing them again, or putting it in their power by any civility of mine, to renew theirs, he would readily acknowledge, that the exposure of an "Absent Man" in an auction-room filled with elegant company, and which was principally caused by their presence, was an adequate excuse for the employment of Cavanah in the presentation of the bust. It was a satisfactory apology with me, and I did not set out with any idea of pleasing "a logical reader."

But to the scene that greeted my opening eye: it was in the form of a letter in Cavannah's writing: it bore the

Athlone post-mark: "'twas strange, 'twas passing strange." I have it now, and shall ever keep it while life is preserved to me!

Having come to an open rupture with my close enemy, "Fyn-segellak-well-brand-en-vast-houd," I read, gentle Reader, (judge for yourself of my emotions, as I pored again and again, over the foul blots on a skin so fair!) I read, I say, as follows :

"DEAR SIR,

"FEARING that you may, through the information of Mrs. O'Carol, who is resident in Dublin, have heard of the alteration in the deportment of my dear child, I am anxious to give you particulars, upon which you may rely as genuine.

"It would be ridiculous in me to affect an ignorance of the passion you entertained for Nora,] or to deny that she once met your advances with an

encouraging approbation. Her grief at your departure was too evident for concealment; and were any further proof necessary, it would appear from her subsequent conduct, which has assumed a vacancy of manner so coequal with your separation from her, that nothing but love could effect it. A total indifference to the objects before her, and a general abstraction of thought, have succeeded her once lively and unaffected behaviour; and where I fondly expected the solace of my few remaining days, I look in vain for a single expression of the love that promised it.

“ Her days are passed in futile, incoherent employments: now will she, under the shadow of our turrene poplars, weave a chaplet of poppies, and deadly night-shade, calling it ‘sweet William!’ and now sit by the hour together, on the banks of the Shan-



non, and read *Romeo and Juliet* with the book turned the wrong end uppermost! She has little appetite for any food except eels, on which she principally lives; and which I think extremely prejudicial to her health.

“Her apothecary increases my lamentation, by assuring me that ~~the~~ whole materia medica would not accelerate the recovery of her former calmness, which he says the healing hand of time can alone restore.

“It is somewhat singular, that although you were undoubtedly the primary party to her aberration, she has of late never mentioned your name, or any circumstance that led to the most remote belief, that you still engaged her varied, or varying thoughts: and I am in constant alarm lest by any unexpected event, the sight of a person to whom she has not been accustomed, may lead to a repetition of those

dreadful wanderings, which, within this day or two, have been somewhat tranquillized

“I have been thus explicit, my dear Sir, in order that I might the better introduce my very earnest wishes, and most unconditional injunctions, that you may not, either out of friendship for me, or any hope of restoring my daughter to her usual temperament, be induced, upon receipt of this, to afford us any personal condolence; and most positively to require your absence on the grounds I have before stated to you, feeling confident that your presence would, by leading my poor Nora into additional deviations, be planting another, and a sharper dagger in my breast.

“As you value the commands of one, who, though he bears you no enmity, must also protect a daughter's peace, so act; and I hope your discrimination,

aided by a sense of propriety, which in such a case ought not to be overbalanced by any other consideration, will ensure your own quietude, while it materially assists mine.

“ I should have given you these mournful particulars some long time back, but that I hoped until Mrs. O’Carol’s arrival in Dublin became known to me, to have kept them from you altogether ; her developement, if not embellishment of facts, I then determined to meet, for a story is seldom repeated in it’s original authenticity.

“ I regret that I am obliged to close my letter, already prominent in sorrow, with a lamentable addition of your worthy Uncle’s serious indisposition, the news of which reached me this morning. My esteem for him could only be excelled by the grief I should most sincerely feel at an occurrence I will not anticipate ; it is

sufficient to meet our misfortunes when they assail us, without enduring their sting in embryo.

“ Believe me, my dear Sir, though circumstances may not appear to authorize the term,

“ Your faithful friend,

“ ARTHUR CAVANNAH.”

Here then, Reader, was a trial for an “ Absent Man,” who having barely reason enough to compass the fact, was given to understand, that his want of it had occasioned a similar deprivation in the mind of one, who had heretofore robbed him of it’s exertion; told too, that he must not visit her—her, Nora! on pain of the complicated penalty of her own distraction, and her father’s indignation! and told too that his Uncle Singlestick had some idea of speedily seeing

“ That undiscovered country, from whose boorn  
No traveller returns.”

This was not all ! the identical circumstance of which Cavannah was apprehensive, was about, by the operation of mine own hand, to occur. Had I not written in legible characters a letter of introduction to him?

Vanderheyden had accepted the letter ; and was there any doubt that Cavannah would read the letter? No, no; not any, not any : this then was an incontrovertible syllogism ; and a person to whose sight Nora was unaccustomed, was now at this perilous moment on the road to—No, no! nonsense ! blind, ridiculous hope ! he was positively at Athlone ! in the barracks, or in the stables of the barracks at Athlone ! His alibi was out of all question impossible ! and I covered my confusion in a clean white pocket-handkerchief, which I kept in my hand, as young ladies do who witness tragedies, against any attack

of ophthalmia! A cold chill followed!

In my agitation, Nora's apothecary, "an alligator stuffed, and other skins of ill shaped fishes," swam across my brain! I instantly rang the bell: it was not answered. It happened to be an Orange anniversary, and the maid was gone to see the show; but the apothecary in petticoats soon appeared: I begged her to mix an opiate with all speed, and bring it to me.

Queen Elizabeth's modesty, when upon the victorious destruction of the Spanish Armada, she chose for the motto of her commemorative medal, the simple and diffident inscription of "Afflavit Deus et dissipantur," was not superior to the unostentatious behaviour of the Queen of Charlatans upon her recommendation of some home-made extract of poppies, in preference to the use of the Turkish species of poppy-juice, which she always

considered excessively deleterious, and caused a hurried sleep.

I consented to take any thing, and every thing in her medicine chest, to procure oblivious moments of repose.

She returned with a phial, and left me: the lady of Macbeth might have called it

“ Proper stuff!”

I thought it was proper, and fixed the glassy substance to my lips.

I passed the night in the sweetest sleep imaginable, and had every reason to be satisfied with my physical landlady's nice and efficacious discrimination between opium and Irish poppy-juice.

I was, however, but in a very slight degree restored, before a fresh calamity, for which Cavannah's concluding sentence had in some measure prepared me, awaited my perusal.

I shall only laconically inform my Reader, should I have one, that I received intelligence from a near neighbour, and intimate acquaintance of my Uncle Singlestick, of his rapid decline; that he was subject to occasional fits of apoplectic plethora, which had been increasing upon him, since the death of his favourite old horse, and that considerable fears were entertained, that his dissolution was not very distant.

He had been, he said, desired by my Uncle, to inform his Nephew of the change that had already taken place, and of the still farther alteration he shortly expected, and to entreat him, should circumstances not render his departure from Ireland particularly oppressive, to take his final blessing, ere he quitted the world for ever. (Here my affection got the better of me, and the tears that flowed



for my Uncle, moistened the words he had dictated.)

My correspondent proceeded to suggest, that as in all possibility the Nevverspar family would wish to revisit their comfortable home at Placid Hall, before the approach of winter should impede their progress to it, I might by chance contrive to accompany them in their journey; and concluded, by begging of me to deliver my Uncle's affectionate remembrance, and farewell to his esteemed friends; and his lamentation at being in too weak a state to address them by his own hand.

With all my follies, of which alas! there has been ample proof, I yet maintained a small share of pristine feeling: and I could not reflect upon the expected loss of my Uncle, though distance had lately separated us, without emotion.

It may perhaps be imagined, that I was laying the foundation of some subsequent operations on the stone of my Uncle's tomb; and that whatever regret I might feel at the first idea of his decease would quickly be converted into the channel of joy at his final dissolution. I protest, however, against an acknowledgment of such sentiments, because I feel a radical conviction, that I was not in any measure actuated by their influence. My grief was genuine, and it's excuse, had it needed any, affection !

In what page have I informed my Reader of Neverspar's amendment? Let me see—no—not there—no, nor any where.

Here then the "Absent Man," is caught !

I shall not apologize for the omission, holding in mind my original position of the impracticability of unerring details, from a pen that must of

course be as absent as it's guide: the guide and the pen may suffer, but cannot beg pardon.

However, it may be as well to mend the matter a little, and upon second thoughts, by which there will be nothing lost, mention, that the visitor of my friend Job, not finding so hospitable a reception, as, from the known liberality and good nature of his patient, he was taught to anticipate, had in utter despair of wrinkling his brow, or hearing the bitter language he usually experienced wherever he went, left the sofa of his unconquered host, and retired amid the ridicule of the laughing Victor, and the pleasant sallies of Mrs. Neverspar and the comical little brunette—The comical little brunette! • Yes, certainly, she was still the comical little brunette; but as certainly, she was not the same comical little brunette, whose round awkward shoulders at first sight shocked me so

terribly, that is to say, she was uncommonly improved. Fatima had one qualification, which it might be well, were it set up as an example, if many young ladies of my acquaintance would follow: She was always the same, always good-natured, always affable, always charitable, and consequently never peevish, never uncivil, never severe: there was an evenness of disposition in Fatima, which might fairly be balanced against the beauty of other persons, who might in this point be deficient: I shall not say how the scale would preponderate.

The sympathetic coincidence of ideas is perfectly astonishing; this has been shown by the various likes and dislikes, that at one and the same period attacked Nora and the "Absent Man." You heard of his partiality for eels, at the time Nora would eat no other animal food. You heard of his pleasure in Romeo and Juliet, at the time Nora

would read it constantly, though perhaps the position of the book, might be reversed: and, though it may appear still more singular, at the very identical point of time, when my poor Uncle Singlestick's friend undertook to advise for me a passage to England, the Neverspars were contemplating the scenery of Placid Hall.

I learnt at the time that I missed the gouty chair, and all the implements used in support of the gout, which, though a treasonable subject, must never be put down, that plans were in agitation, to give up the beauties and elegancies of Ireland for the more substantial comforts of dulce domum! and indeed the comical little brunette was in the act of packing up her young gentleman on the donkey led by the old gentleman in advance, as I rapped at the door to give the sad tidings, with which I was commissioned by my Uncle's friend. This

mournful intelligence accelerated Job's movements, for now he could move; and he declared he would sail for Holyhead with the first fair wind.

I now became plunged in a predicament by far the most complex that I ever endured; learning on one side, that Nora was only a few removes from literal distraction; (Alas! it was no longer figurative!) and on the other, that my Uncle wished for me in the chamber of death, at the time when my presence in Ireland was the only, and that the most remote, chance of my ever again beholding the dark eye of Cavannah's daughter. Duty called me in all the pathetic appeals a dying relation could furnish to repair to England! Love prompted me, in all the silent rhetoric of Nora's flashing gaze, to remain at Dublin! Duty demanded my continued residence there! Love, through the means of Vanderheyden, went yet further, and whis-

pered a faintly caught hope, that I might again vegetate at Athlone! Jealousy, (O beware of jealousy!) rankled in my breast, when I recollected that the Count would be the unaccustomed one.

O, nautical Reader! if you are not indignant at the idea of waiting for a fair wind for Holyhead (remember that as the Neverspars were not to carry the mail, there could be no harm in getting across the channel pleasantly,) pilot my love-sick bark into any haven you can. The mental storm has shipwrecked my ideas! my anchor is carried away! I sink hopeless! and my rudder floats on the billows of anarchy! — Here I must pause awhile, my passions having led me a little into the bowers of romance, and effected in their absolute sway some slight deviation from the plain unvarnished style of the prior pages of this narrative, wherein I have attempted

to depict simply what I felt, and how I acted as an "Absent Man."

I can now go on to state, that as I was thus tormentingly occupied, the Neverspars were pursuing their intention of a speedy adieu to the Sons of Erin, by every previous measure their activity could supply. I grieve, to add, that the enviable mirth I ever admired, as twin possessor with good-nature, in the even paths of Job's mind, had gradually lost their wonted zest, from the time he heard of my Uncle Singlestick's decline. I imagined, that he regretted, in addition to this circumstance, that the wishes of his friend, with regard to the marriage of his daughter, remained wholly unfulfilled, and that the grave would, for all he could divine, close upon my Uncle's mortal remains ere they should be accomplished!

A train of thought, cheerless and unusual, had evidently clouded the



late jocund countenance of Never-spar : Mrs. Neverspar saw it, and lamented it, but took every precaution to avoid Job's consideration of it's effects, by diverting him in a way peculiarly likely to dissipate his care, because, though she fully witnessed the distress, and felt for the cause of her husband's disquietude, she never suffered him to see that she was aware of it.

Fatima was certainly, though a comical little brunette, a girl of no common mental ability : she was always superior to any untoward circumstances, and in proportion as any point of difficulty in which she was engaged increased, her happy disposition arose above the level of it's temporary depression.

There was, at the period of preparation for her family's departure, a look of regret in Fatima's countenance, which I had not before regarded : It

could not be for my Uncle Singlestick! It could not be for the Count! whom she had only seen for an hour or two, and scarcely mentioned since! It could not be for parting with the delights of Dublin! which contained only one intimate acquaintance, and that an "Absent Man!" It could not be for the loss of that Absent Man! and yet it certainly was regret of some sort or other!

I myself felt much concern at the approaching loss of my kind and forgiving friends, in whose society I had been so frequently relieved from my own. I was asked to accompany them; even Fatima said my Uncle would expect to see me; but, alas! how was I to act! I knew not: I was in the dreadful state of suspense and anxiety of a person, who, knowing that "there is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune," knew not in what

direction to steer on the opposing current: it served but one way, there were two contrary channels!

Thus situated, I believed the Nevverspars to be on the very point of embarkation! I could not take leave of them! they had quitted their house, and were at a hotel in Dawson Street, and an opportunity was offered me on the preceding day of a final adieu, in this laconic note from Nevverspar: "Off to morrow!" but my spirits forbad the interview!

At this precise period, the crisis! the climax of every thing interesting! I found on my table another dispatch from Arthur Cavannah! the contents I shall insert without comment: indeed all observation would be superfluous on materials, that bring their explanation with them.

The letter was written in an evident state of agitation, for which indeed it's contents most fully account-

ed. It began by stating in the most affectionate terms, that as I had been somewhat apprised in a former sheet of the melancholy alteration in his dear daughter, I should now, Cavanah hoped, receive the further relation of it's consequences, with which he felt it to be his duty to furnish me, without blaming him for insisting on my continued absence from Athlone.

He proceeded to inform me, that since his last communication, every symptom of a total absence, and alienation of mind, of which he was then apprehensive, had increased: and that his poor Nora, acting in direct opposition to every dictate of reason and common sense, would continually wander into the regions of romance: she would take nothing that was not, as she fancied, presented by the hand of her true knight! and as the instances were very rare, in which the act and

the ideas were in unison with each other, she had, several times, been on the point of starvation! Her attitudes became as inconsistent as her thoughts, and she would often sit sideways on the lounging chair in the library, and declare, that her fiery-footed steed would soon canter her to the entrance porch of her William's castle! then she would be heard shrieking aloud, and desiring the maid to take the portcullis from her head, "it pressed so hard." Sometimes, said Cavannah, she would nurse her favourite Jemima, the beautiful white cat, in her lap, and sing, in broken melodies, "for bonny sweet William is all my joy:" then suddenly throw her from her embrace and cry out, "hence, loathed Melancholy! of Cerberus, and blackest Midnight born!" These terrible and distressing rambles continued, he said, for a few days, and were then followed by a

complete derangement of his daughter's faculties.

The apothecary, who attended her, urged in the strongest terms the absolute necessity of a gentle treatment, as the last hope of her recovery: he had declared her to be insane, but considered, that as the cause of the temporary relaxation of her mind was too evident to be mistaken, it's unfortunate effect would not be permanent.

She remained, however, said Cavanaugh, although in a tranquil, yet positively in a lost state of intellectual discernment for three whole days and nights; at the close of which period; his delighted ears were assailed with the well-known accents of "dear father:" a debilitated frame had, he said, rendered any exertion of utterance excessively fatiguing, and he would not suffer her to finish the sentence.

Cavannah next commenced a disquisition on the various effects that ensued from an insanity occasioned by love, and said, that if the patient escaped danger from her own hand, which sad infliction he was happy to think was not much to be apprehended, it not unusually happened that the very object, by which her mental stream had been diverted from it's right course, would, upon her recovering the former channel of reason, immediately become the very bane of her happiness; and that frequently a person thus circumstanced considered the recollection of her former love as the only drawback upon her present joy, and consequently banished it for ever from her thoughts.

He proceeded to acknowledge the receipt of the package, and said, he had sent his Majesty to Crazy Castle: that he had read my letter, expressing in such handsome terms my opinion of Captain Vanderheyden with much

personal disquietude, as he had felt it to be impossible, situated as he was to take that notice of him, which the laws of hospitality, and the impulse of his own mind, would in any other case have prompted him to have done; but under existing circumstances he had contributed his utmost to prevent the occurrence of a calamity, of which he had long been apprehensive from the peculiar state of his daughter's mind, in case she should in her delicate condition obtain a sight of a person she had been unaccustomed to see.

His efforts had therefore since the arrival of Vanderheyden, whose gorgeous trappings were so alluring, been principally directed to the concealment of his daughter! •Alas! continued he, "Nora was more than a match for me!" your counterfeit friend, attended with his men the service of our parish church: I was ob-



liged to do my duty there, and left the strictest orders I could express, that, as I could not do it at home at the same time, Nora might by no means be permitted to leave the house. I knew that if I had taken her with me, the danger would have been great: but, alas! it ended in the same way, and to my inexpressible grief and astonishment my daughter deliberately walked into her pew, just as I commenced, "when the wicked man!" The accommodation allotted to the military was immediately opposite, and you may form your own notions of my agitation.

"I will not dwell upon a subject which causes more grief in the relation, than you can possibly suffer in the perusal of it, and circumscribe the catastrophe as much as my convulsed frame of mind will allow me.

"I saw that the fatal glance had been given! my Nora's eye was ri-

veted on the embroidery of the unaccustomed one! It was love at first sight! it was precisely what I had dreaded! My active watchfulness never slept subsequently, till the curtain of night had drawn it's veil over my fears.

“ Vanderheyden was notoriously smitten! He, your false deceitful friend, sought every subterfuge within the reach of man to enter my house. I pursued every invention a zealous parent could devise, to throw obstacles in the way, and combat his ingenuity. I saw through his plot, and baffled for a length of time his artifices, till (to close my sad tale) this esteemed friend this ~~honourable~~ Captain Vanderheyden! This robber—this—Oh! what epithet can express my indignation: this Count! stole my Nora in the dead of night! and with her my only solace in this afflicting world.

“ I can no more, farewell! Your Uncle’s blessing attend you ever !”

The shock of an earthquake, gentle Reader ! was calmness to my feelings, as the communication dropped from my nervous hand.

I had but one step to take ; that step brought me to the packet ! and I embarked with the Neverspars at last !

“ England, with all thy faults I love thee still.”

THE END.





